

REGIS COLLEGE LIBRARY



3 1761 05808672 9

THE CHRISTIAN HYPOTHESIS

BY THE LATE
EDWARD CAMPBELL TAINSH
AUTHOR OF 'A STUDY OF TENNYSON'S WORKS,' ETC.

WITH A PREFACE BY
THE REV. FRANCIS G. BELTON
VICAR OF ST. PATRICK'S, BIRMINGHAM

REGIS
BIBL. MAJ.
COLLEGE

85164

BT

771

.T35

1922

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C. 4

NEW YORK, TORONTO

BOMBAY, CALCUTTA AND MADRAS

1922

PREFACE

THE reason why so obscure a person as myself has been chosen to write the preface to this book calls for some explanation. The widow of the author asked me to read through the manuscript which had been left in her care, and to advise her whether or no she should proceed with its publication. After I had read the first few chapters I had no doubt in my mind as to what my answer should be. The book, I feel sure, is one which should prove a help to persons of good average education who have failed to find those grounds for belief in the Christian Religion which are essential if they are to accept the Christian ideal as their aim in life. It has often been emphasised that the real difficulty in accepting Christianity at the present time is the moral demands that faith makes ; in other words, the stumbling block is our present social conditions rather than theological or philosophical difficulties. Of the truth of this contention I am convinced, but at the same time I am equally convinced that unless the central teachings of Christianity have obtained possession of men's minds, Christian moral principles can have little influence upon their conduct. Hence the need and value of a book like this, which attempts to give a reasoned statement for the faith which ought to be within us.

FRANCIS G. BELTON,
Vicar of St. Patrick's, Birmingham.

CONTENTS

BOOK I

	PAGE
WHAT IS FAITH?	I

BOOK II

THE OBJECTIVES OF FAITH	29
-----------------------------------	----

BOOK III

(PARENTHETICAL) GRAVE HINDRANCES	47
--	----

BOOK IV

THE GROUNDS UPON WHICH THE CHRISTIAN FAITH MAY BE RECEIVED	69
---	----

BOOK V

THE DIVINE PROVISION FOR THE FULFILMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC	93
---	----

BOOK I
WHAT IS FAITH?

1. Belief and Faith distinguished.
2. Faith and Knowledge distinguished.
3. Faith is Belief concerning, and Trust in, a person. The search of the truth-seeker is for moral truth—truth that involves duty.
4. The first work of the Seeker is to give attention to the presentation of the truth and its demands ;
5. And, secondly, to enquire if the grounds commend themselves to the reason and the conscience.
6. For Faith is an activity of man in his reason, the enabling conditions being :
 - (a) The honest and good heart.
 - (b) Divine illumination.
7. Faith is belief in the sphere of the spiritual.
8. Faith is belief in truth : it is objective.

The fruits of faith are the fruits of truth.
That which a man believes works life or death in him.
9. What is Morality ?

The moral is the outcome of the spiritual in action.
10. Truth is self-illuminative.
11. Trust presupposes belief.
12. Trust rests upon, and can greatly help, faith.
13. What, then, is Faith ?

THE CHRISTIAN HYPOTHESIS

BOOK I

WHAT IS FAITH ?

§ 1

THERE are two allied words which are germane to the present enquiry: these are, Belief and Faith. But because 'Faith' has no related verb as 'Belief' has, we are almost driven to throw what would be the work of that verb on to the verb of 'Belief.' This transference of the work of the Faith verb on to the Belief verb would be a very small matter if the Belief verb could do the work imposed upon it. But if Belief is a matter mainly intellectual, while Faith is, in many cases, a complex act or state answering to the whole spiritual nature of man, then the transference tends to confuse and degrade the idea of Faith as we find it so perpetually confused and degraded in ordinary religious teaching.

§ 2

Faith is sometimes accused of being credulity or superstition because it authorises action upon grounds short of positive knowledge. It has been called 'the cardinal intellectual sin.' But of absolute knowledge, in any region, we have practically none; nearly all our so-called knowledge is belief, is inference, is faith.

The only absolute knowledge that we have is that of the contents of our own consciousness. If I can say, 'I see a tree,' I know that I have consciousness which I call

seeing ; but I do not know that the tree which I think I see is a reality. The seeming picture of the tree may be a phantasm generated within my own being, as indeed such pictures are in dreaming and madness. The invincible conviction which I have that seeing is brought about by an object external to myself is a belief based, it may be, upon many considerations, or growing out of the very make of me : it is not knowledge, in the absolute sense of the word. Every other form of the contents of the consciousness may be similarly shown to be shut up within itself—to testify to nothing but itself—as far as absolute knowledge is concerned ; and, thus shut up, it is not only limited, but worthless. The value of the states of consciousness is that they testify to something beyond the consciousness ; and the conviction of the reality of this something beyond is a matter of belief. In other words, for such absolute knowledge as we have, namely, the knowledge of the contents of our own consciousness, to be of value, belief must be super-added.

When, then, the agnostic says, ‘ I know nothing about the supernatural,’ or even goes as far as to say, ‘ We *can* know nothing about the supernatural,’ the answer is, ‘ It is true : we do, we can, *know* nothing ; but also we know, can know, nothing about anything except the states of our own consciousness, which, standing alone, may be phantasmal.’ For practical purposes, all is belief : we live by belief, the product of our understanding ; we walk by faith—by natural faith (or by spiritual faith)—in the assumption that our invincible convictions are not delusions : that the universe is not a lie or a madhouse. But because, in all regions, we live by belief, not by absolute knowledge, to draw a distinction between natural things as if we could *know* them, and supernatural things because we can but believe about them, is misleading. Our conviction of the reality of the outer world, and the conviction of the Theist that God is, stand *intellectually* on the same footing : the former is no more knowledge, in the absolute sense of the word, than is the latter. All is belief. To be sure, belief

may, and in material things constantly does, rise to a moral certainty—a certainty so absolute that a man would no more hesitate to risk his life upon it than upon his knowledge of the contents of his consciousness: yet it is still belief: the psychological category under which it stands is not changed: we do not know; we believe; and all questions of heaven and earth have to be approached by us in the attitude of faith. That faith is belief is therefore no reproach to it; for belief, whether in things natural or in things supernatural, is all that we have.

§ 3

If then faith cannot claim to be absolute knowledge, how is it to be defined when it claims to be more than mere belief? An approach to an answer may be made by saying that faith is belief in that which cannot be proved to the understanding, but is a necessity of reason and conscience. Or—which is not very different—faith is belief concerning, and trust in, a person. But these two definitions must be reinforced by the declaration of the motive at work in both cases, and in the power resident in the doctrines addressed. The search of the truth-seeker or of the trusting person is not for the acquisition of knowledge or even of truth, in the intellect, but of truth in the spirit, of moral truth, of truth that involves duty; and the truth sought may be such as is able to operate upon the spirit of the seeker, and to promote power and willingness to the performance of duty.

A case might occur in which the truth-seeker arrived at a conclusion upon some doctrine which promised him the guidance which he sought, but concerning which he afterwards experienced doubts, which doubts upon meditation grew stronger, and the faith conclusion partly or all but disappeared. What now would be the condition of the seeker? Could he rightly say: 'I have lost all that I seemed to have gained. I stand where I did when I began the search'? Almost certainly, he could not. All

that he had come to regard as truth in his search and endeavour—he being the man under supposition—would hardly have to be regarded as false. The complications of belief are multitudinous, and some germ of truth may have been present in that which he was now tempted to regard as wholly erroneous. Moreover, the faithful endeavour after truth will not leave him without results. That which he believed had wholly or in measure failed him, but his part would not have failed of its true results. Truth is truth on its merits, but fidelity has merits too, and it will have worked itself into his spiritual being.

Addressing ourselves to an Agnostic, who has confessed that he asserts no more than that we *have* not grounds for belief in the spiritual, we should ask: ‘Do you mean the universal “we,” or do you mean only yourself? If the former, how do you get at the knowledge of this universal condition of men’s minds? If you mean the latter only, then we draw together.’ For the business of the truth-seeker is simply to state *his* convictions and the condition of *his* mind upon the subject in question, and to leave any other with whom he is in contact free to do just the same, assuming no superiority in his position over that of the other. The prevailing vice among men is that they dogmatise, and this they do in both affirmation and denial, each driving the other into a position of antagonism. If, instead, a man would say: ‘As far as you and I can claim, you are just as likely to be right as I am, and I am just as likely to be right as you are’; and if the two men would sit down and each spread out before the other his convictions, the two seeking to form a joint judgment upon the doctrine affirmed and denied in these convictions, they would not only be more likely to get at truth than they could in any other way, but would rise from their conference kinder and truer men. For to differ from a man is so far from being a reason for separating from him that it is a reason for seeking him. The quest of truth is the business of both, and each should desire that if he is wrong he may be convinced of the fact, and if he is

right the other may learn the truth from him. For, unless he is a bigot, every man is a truth-seeker to the end of his days.

§ 4

A man to whom some presentation of what professes to be spiritual truth is offered, or another who, having all his life been familiar with the presentation, now for the first time wakes up to the question whether the presentation is true, has before him as his first duty to ask what the presentation amounts to. Yet, in truth, this fundamental question is seldom grappled with. Another question, often supposed to be the same as it, is put in its place, and this other question, profoundly important in its right place, becomes pernicious in its action when it is made to take the place of that which should precede it. Everywhere the battle rages between upholders and assailants of beliefs upon the question of the *grounds* of them, while neither upholders nor assailants know what the belief about which they are contending really is. Anyone who will take the trouble to examine the multitudes of discordant opinions that claim for themselves the name of Christian truth, and who will, on the other hand, be at pains to realise the gross ignorance of otherwise thoughtful rationalists of what Christianity, fairly represented, amounts to, will be convinced of the accuracy of this assertion. The first work of a man brought face to face with the question of the grounds of faith is to attend, not to the grounds, but to the faith itself and the duties which it professes to impose. *These* questions being faced, the question of grounds will any number of times be superseded. The faith and its duties, adequately known and realised, will shine by their own light or gloom by their own darkness: they will prove or disprove themselves. The despair of the present hour is that the masses of men are ignorant of the religion they profess to hold, and treat its moral claims as if they were fairy tales: the hope of the present hour is that there are men who are waking up from this spiritual and moral

torpor, and who are seeking to know the reality of what they profess to believe, and purposing to act it out.

§ 5

But the substance of a doctrine being known, it will in measure, and often in large measure, be necessary as an independent enquiry to examine the grounds upon which it claims belief. This examination will probably be the less necessary the deeper the doctrine, true or false ; for such a doctrine will, as has been said, tend to shine by its own light or gloom by its own darkness. In the case of minor and secondary doctrines and doctrines of professedly divine ordination for the purpose of setting forth primary truths or driving them home into practice, the need would be greater and might be emphatic.

What the grounds of any particular belief are, will depend upon what the belief itself is. But there are general grounds of belief—grounds which, if they are not present, condemn the belief without further enquiry. If the belief—the doctrine—were one of science, the general grounds of belief would be that the doctrine commended itself to the reason ; that it harmonised with other doctrines already held to be true, and that belief in it worked. If the doctrine were one in the region of the spiritual, which is now occupying our attention, there would have to be added to the foregoing grounds that it commended itself to the conscience as well as the reason, and that belief in it worked to the production of good *moral* results. If any one demanded to be able to say ‘ I know,’ in the absolute sense of the word, these grounds would probably afford no logical basis for his conclusion ; but as ‘ I know ’ is a phantasm save in the region of subjective consciousness, and as we all through life are compelled to walk by belief or faith, these general grounds will go at least a very long way towards justifying a belief that can appeal to them.

A long way, and far enough to fix upon a man the obligation to fulfil the duties involved in the belief which he

holds, but, as with discernment which exceeds belief, not far enough to justify him in saying ' I know that I have faith ' in distinction from simple belief, or dogmatically to assert to another, ' This which I believe, being apprehended by my faith, is true.' All that, here or there, he can say is, ' I know that I believe ' ; whether he has faith must be determined by a higher judgment than his. And all that he can say of the doctrine which he holds is, ' I believe it with my whole soul. The grounds of my belief are such and such : are especially the fundamental grounds enumerated above ; and I think that if you knew the doctrine by meditation upon it as well as I do, and would consider the grounds as carefully as you are capable of doing, you, no false spirit interfering with your judgment, would believe as I do.'

It now lies before us to enquire concerning those workings in and upon the human soul to which the path to faith leads.

§ 6

Faith is an act or activity of man in, that is, within, his reason : it is not a gift received in passivity ; not a non-reasoned conviction projected by God into the consciousness.

It is common for less thoughtful teachers of religion to set faith and reason in contrast or even in opposition ; and at the lowest level of such teaching faith is exalted and reason is all but denounced.

What, in controversy with this, is, and what is not, to be maintained here will be indicated to the percipient reader by a simple illustration.

Climbing a mountain is an activity of man in his muscles. There are many activities of man in his muscles which are not climbing a mountain. If it were pitch dark, a man could not well climb a mountain, nor could he if he were drunk or very ill or in a state of starvation. Notwithstanding all these, climbing a mountain is an activity of man in his muscles.

There are many activities of man in his reason which are not faith, and there may be many hindrances to faith in the man himself. None the less, faith may be an activity of a man within his reason.

The enabling conditions of faith may be numerous : supreme among them are two. First, the honest and good heart ; and, second, divine illumination.

That the honest and good heart is an essential condition of spiritual discernment of spiritual truth, cannot be doubted. The pure in heart shall see God, and none but the pure in heart will truly lay hold of a divine revelation offered to their acceptance. Even in temporal matters, the honest and good heart clears the vision : the willingness to see all the facts of a case, and to estimate them in their true proportion, is the prerogative of sincerity : how supremely shall discernment in matters spiritual be helped by it !

No more can it be doubted that divine illumination is a means to faith. To say this is but to say that the light of God within a man waits upon the revelation brought within his ken in the providence of God. This all must hold who believe in divine revelation at all. Only impurity of spirit will keep a man blind when God has brought light to him.

Neither of these great truths, however, alters the fact of the nature of faith, or prevents that it is an activity of the man in his reason.

One or two things in, or connected with, New Testament teaching might seem to antagonise this view. In 1 Cor. xiii. 9 there is a faith enumerated amongst the gifts of the Spirit. That this is not the 'saving faith' at present under consideration is clear from the fact that a man has to be a Christian before he can receive this gift. Moreover, St. Paul speaks of this gift in terms which he could not have used concerning the faith of which he was the divine Laureate. He says (1 Cor. xiii. 2), 'And though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.' The gift is clearly a special thing,

akin to the power of working miracles, superadded to some who are already in a state of faith, in the moral sense of the word, and which may become worthless if the moral fails.

Far above this last there may be a degree or kind of faith which enables a man 'to place himself beyond the region of mere moral certainty in the actual realisation of things believed in a high and unusual manner.' But this also is an endowment of a man already in a condition of saving faith, and one which in an unclean spirit might be simulated by the grossest delusions.

There is, once more, a passage in the New Testament (Eph. ii. 8) which has been thought to assert the gift-nature of saving faith. But any one who will read, and attend to the punctuation of, the passage in the Revised Version, will pretty certainly be convinced that the thing there said to be the gift of God is not faith but *salvation*.

The importance of the contention that faith is an act and not a gift lies in the fact that, so, it is a duty. And as such it is surely always represented to be in the New Testament, and unbelief is spoken of as sin, or of sin. The whole Catholic Church, save some narrowest sects, thus regards faith, and any instructed Christian teacher would say that it is sin or of sin if a man does not believe a revelation of God that has been adequately set before him. The unbelief of the heathen, St. Paul argues to be the outcome of wickedness. It might indeed be that a man's duty was to purify himself and to pray, and, so, to wait for that gift of faith which could alone be given to the pure and the prayerful ; and probably this would be the precise attitude prescribed by St. Paul for those who should 'covet earnestly the best gifts.' But, however near this may be to the attitude which seeks for 'saving faith,' it is not the attitude itself. A man is bound not only to prepare himself for faith, but so to examine the thing presented to him for acceptance that he can form a judgment upon it. To do less than this is to fail to stand in his full humanity, which has reason as one of its supreme endowments. The judgment formed may be of the most

elementary character in the intellectual region, the outcome of the simplest and most untutored intelligence ; yet it may be absolute in the moral sphere. The intellectual Pharisees found Christ 'a sinner,' because (or as they pretended 'because') He was not a Sabbatarian to their pattern : the blind man argued, 'Why herein is the marvel, that ye know not whence He is, and yet He opened mine eyes.' Whether the blind man or the Pharisees had the rationality, the world decided a good many years ago. For, very certain, true faith is deep common sense. Even so, God is in the matter at every point. A man's natural endowments are God's gift in his creation ; the truth to be received by faith is concerning God ; the revelation of that truth, natural or supernatural, is from Him ; the illumination that accompanies revelation is of His bestowal ; the grace to be honest of heart is His ; in Him, spiritually no less than naturally, 'we live and move and have our being.' To affirm the function of the human reason in the work of faith is not to deny God, but to confess Him. In the deepest sense, faith is through and through by the Holy Ghost, but it is by the Holy Ghost in such a sense that it is the duty and act of man.

The history of the rise of faith in the human spirit would seem to be somewhat as follows : A man has brought before him a work or a teaching that professes to be from God, and the circumstances of his contact with it seem to indicate (for no wise man pursues every novelty) that he should regard it with attention. Were he other than a good man he would refuse to obey this indication, or would yield to it without diligence or earnestness. If he is a man of imperfect moral preparedness, his diligence may fail of good results, for only a pure heart and a single eye will secure that self-emptiness, that cleansing from egotism, that deliverance from clinging to opinions because they are his, without which truth cannot enter. But if his heart is that 'good ground' in which good seed can spring up and bear fruit, and seeing that he is challenged by a solemn demand, under circumstances that justify his

individual attention to it, what will he do ? He will pray probably (and if not, his attention will be prayerful) to Him whose illumination alone can make spiritual truth clear. What else will he do ? He will, if he is wise as well as honest, search for all the facts of the case ; endeavour to appraise those facts ; consider what they involve, and what they lead to ; he will open his mind to all honestly intended antagonistic puttings ; he will, as far as may be, ascertain what effect this new belief has had upon those who have already received it : in short, he will do his utmost to form a judgment upon that which has challenged his regard. Has he reached faith ? Clearly not, as yet. Is he on the right road to faith ? Who will venture to say he is not ? But he has been dealing with the matter in the full and earnest exercise of his reason ; and had he failed to do so, he would have felt that he was fooling, in the gravest sense of the word. Will he reach faith ? Who can doubt that, if the thing is true, he will ? But he has been travelling to faith by the road of reason. When he arrives at faith, will he have left reason behind him ? Ask him why he believes, and he will soon set your doubts upon that point at rest. To be sure, he may have arrived at the goal of faith by some sudden flash of illumination that clears away mists and exhibits the significance and proportion of things as he never saw them before ; but this illumination will be the crown, as it has been the enabling accompaniment, of his endeavours. And if it should be said that it sometimes happens that a man receives spiritual truth on the instant of its presentation, without time for reasoning, and yet proves by his after-conduct that this belief was substantial, the answer may be that in such a case the proffered doctrine was simple—not in the sense unimportant, but in the sense non-complex ; or, that the truth, meeting the type or the case of the man, wakes at once an echo from his general convictions or his needs. For the thing contended for is not that faith must come slowly, nor that it must come by *process of reasoning*. Its speed may be anything from that of the

lightning flash to that of the slow-growing oak ; and its entrance is not across a chain of syllogisms, but through the open door of an illumined reason. By whatever mode, divine or human, faith is produced, it is when produced the outcome of a convinced judgment. Faith is not a phenomenon projected into the passive consciousness : it is the *man* who believes.

An illustration may emphasise the argument. Suppose an honest and devout-minded Brahmin to be brought for the first time into contact with an adequate presentation of Christianity. What ought he to do ? Ought he to listen and wait and pray, expecting, if the thing is true, some divine flash of conviction to pass through his soul apart from any efforts or mental processes within himself ? Or ought he to call up all his faculties of discrimination and judgment, hoping for divine help to enable him to arrive at a just conclusion ? If faith is not reason, then the only course open to him is the first of these two. But the first of these two is the method of all forms of fanaticism. The man surrenders his self-lordship, and commits himself to he knows not what. Whereas the second of these two leaves the man in his integrity, and builds him upon the only power of discerning truth possessed by normal man. The divine help that he abundantly needs then plays into his proper constitution, and makes him more a man the more it is poured upon him.

But, it may be said, human reason often, very often, opposes itself to the conclusions of faith. To which it must first be answered, that not all that calls itself faith is faith. All sorts of delusions and presumptions appropriate that great name to themselves. Nevertheless it is true that human reasonings are perpetually opposing themselves to the conclusions of true faith. It is, however, not alone in the spiritual that human reasonings go wrong ; and human reasonings that go wrong are *failures* of reason, not forms of it. And in spiritual matters, besides that men often miserably fail through want of imagination, nearly everything turns upon the moral condition of the enquirer,

and the presence or absence of that self-emptiness which makes him receptive of divine help. To see God is the supreme act of the reason ; but it is the pure in heart alone and those who are rapt, not upon themselves but upon the vision of Him, that see Him.

It would therefore seem that, not by the reviling of human reason but by summoning it into the regions of holiness and worship, religion can best be helped.

If reason is thought of as mere logic-chopping, as the mere drawing of conclusions from prescribed premisses, it is no wonder that it is rejected, and rejected with scorn, as the raw material of faith. But this is not reason, it is mere reasoning in the technical sense of the word ; that reasoning which, as has been confessed, so often goes wrong. The critical and subtle work of the reason is not to draw conclusions from premisses, but to test the truth of the premisses. The narrowest, most confident, least honest and least earnest persons may be the keenest logic-choppers, and indeed the mere inference drawing faculty is most prominent in the young and clever-foolish. A wise man is he who looks to his premisses, who understands the difficulty of making sure of them, the difficulty of knowing that he has all that are necessary ; who is honest enough to have no preferences, to make no selections to suit his preconceived opinions ; who is humble enough to know that, though it is the duty of man to seek truth, it is beyond his power to find it except in a spirit of self-emptiness which divine aid must fill. The wise man is above all things meek, none the less for being ever so daring in the quest of truth. All this is far removed from the impertinence of self-confident 'reasoning' as it well could be, and leaves reason rooted in character, and in trust in God.

§ 7

Faith is belief in the sphere of the spiritual. The conviction of the truth of one of Euclid's propositions ; of the soundness of a scientific generalisation ; of the reality of

some well attested but inexplicable phenomena ; of the existence of a First Cause, would be no more than mere belief. Were Natural Science and the uniformity of the existing order of things all, there would be no room for faith. The first article of faith is ' I believe in Personality and Will, Divine and Human.'

It may be well, however, besides showing in what sense the term ' spiritual ' is used in these pages, to distinguish this sense from other meanings in which the word is used, and by the existence of which ambiguity is often brought into the employment of the term.

(1) By a ' spirit ' is often meant a being whose substance is other than matter. This meaning has no place here, and indeed no one knows anything of ' spirit ' from that point of view.

(2) A being able to reason on questions of right, able to love (or hate, if his condition is evil) the right, able to will right or evilly, is a spiritual being. Such is man, and in this sense the word ' spiritual ' is used in this argument.

(3) In Christian theology men are said to be indwelt of the Holy Ghost, and men so indwelt are called ' spiritual.'

(4) Men who live according to the dictates of their spiritual nature, or, which is not much different, according to the motions of the Holy Spirit, are said to be ' spiritual ' in contrast with others who are ' carnal.'

§ 8

Faith is belief in truth. A man might be wholly set upon the desire for truth, and entirely willing to obey it, and yet through the unfavourable conditions of his life might have been brought into contact with little but error. If he believed this error, his belief would not be faith, and would not bear the fruits of faith. His faithfulness would bear the fruits of faithfulness, and his act of believing might be largely the result of a gracious docility, but his belief would bear the fruits proper to that which he believed. The case is like that of a man who conscientiously does

that which is wrong, and whose integrity bears the fruits of integrity, while his acts result in consequences natural to their kind. In other words, the fruits of faith are the fruits of truth : it is not a man's act of believing, but that which he believes, which works life or death in him. A man's moral quality, at starting, is what it is: a good man is a good man before any new departure in belief is made ; but when, being a good man, he believes something new, it is not the fact of his belief but the matter of it which works new results in him. That is to say, creed generates character because truth or error generate character ; and when a man, laying hold of spiritual truth, has faith, in the proper sense of the word, it is truth, that is God, that makes him what he anew becomes. The thing that takes place is not some subjective action—not the operation of a man upon himself, but a change wrought in the man by that which is not himself. The process is a reality, as much as is the action of some physical substance upon the body.

The clear discernment of this truth is of vital importance. There are those who take a pride in the attitude of unbelief, independently, almost, of the quality of that which they reject. But there are others, meeker or weaker souls, who seem to think that there is a virtue in believing, especially if the thing they accept makes high claims, apart from that stringent enquiry which should have preceded their acceptance. The entanglements resulting from this attitude of pious concession may be most subtle, even as the attitude is most erroneous. A doctrine offering itself as a new candidate for belief should be treated with the utmost severity ; should be regarded as neither friend nor foe, but should be invited and required to deliver up its credentials. The man who, avoiding the pride of scepticism, can thus guard his soul from credulity has the best hope of arriving at truth, and of truly believing the truth at which he arrives.

And even so, when all pains have been taken, who shall say that he has grasped the whole truth, and only the truth, that he believes himself to have received ? For the

truth has to enter a mind full of prepossessions, prejudices, imperfect apprehensions and even positive errors ; and these may commingle with and corrupt the truth, pure in itself, which has been received, or may incapacitate the mind for apprehending that truth in its integrity. Therefore, while no wise man will be perpetually re-opening questions that his judgment has closed, every wise man will be ready to suffer the entrance of light to test his beliefs in detail, and will hold himself bound frankly to answer every honestly-intended challenge that is presented to him. Thus he will not only behave justly to others, but he will be perpetually purifying his apprehensions and strengthening his hold upon that which is really true.

The failure to do this is an almost universal characteristic of those who hold a settled belief. The sceptic, unless he is too indifferent to trouble himself, is always seething, and indeed it is part of his virtue that he is so. But believers are content to settle upon their lees, and this contentment is *not* part of *their* virtue. In faith, as in life, he who stops growing withers, and even if he did not, it is a man's *business* to grow. 'I count not myself to have apprehended,' says St. Paul, and this sense of incompleteness is the stimulus that moves to effort, the hunger that calls for food, by which growth takes place. Let any living-minded man who holds a great truth compare his apprehension of that truth at the present moment with the apprehension of it which he had years ago ! It is safe to say that no mind, even of those face to face with pure truth, holds more than a version of that truth.

And who is face to face with pure truth ? Who shall sort the truths, the half truths, the opinions, the errors, which make up the conglomeration presented to him by the babel of which he is part ? Every man feeds on a diet that might appal a guardian angel of analytic tendencies. The one comfort is that the spiritual organisation has a power of discrimination. The power does not belong to even the spiritual judgment : a man cannot disentangle the web of his own beliefs ; it is with the organisation

that the power rests ; and by this power that organisation rejects or accepts the food-elements offered to it. The selective power, moreover, depends upon the soundness of the organisation, and that soundness will be proved by the disposition to turn food into work. Let a man earnestly and uncompromisingly act out the beliefs that he holds, and he will have used the best means open to him for testing the quality of those beliefs. ' By their fruits ye shall know them,' is as true of beliefs as of persons. A man's *faith* is at most co-extensive with the truth he lives, and that which bears good fruit in him is truth.

There is a consolatory presentation. No one is fed upon unmixed truth ; but perhaps no one willing to be fed is fed on unmixed error. ' The Light which lighteth every man ' will certainly not leave him who loves light rather than darkness unvisited by His beams. To no man born into the world is faith wholly impossible, because from no man born into the world is truth wholly hidden. This we must needs believe, but we can a little *see* how it is true. In the grossest Polytheism there is a sense of a Divine to which man is subject : in the lowest religious rites there is the sense of duty ; and in every human heart there must surely be the possibility of human kindness. The belief in God and Duty, at however low a level ; movements of love, however impulsive and however childish in their renderings, will suffice to keep alive the spirit in which they dwell. ' His tender mercies are over all His works.' Truth in some form or measure is denied to no man : the Holy Spirit strives with every soul : in all, from the highest saint to the lowest savage, faith is possible. But in all, the fruit borne will be in accordance with the truth apprehended and obeyed.

§ 9

Faith is belief on moral (spiritual) grounds, to moral (spiritual) ends, and is itself a moral (spiritual) act.

First, however, to justify the identification of the moral

and the spiritual in the above proposition. It is common to talk of the 'moral *and* the spiritual,' and one even hears of 'mere morality.' Of course, if in any man's thoughts the moral means the prudential, and morality, the condition upon which society will stamp a person as respectable, then the moral and the spiritual have nothing to do with each other. But to use the word so is to debase the coin of the divine realm. The being who can think 'I ought' is in constitution a moral being, and he who follows this up with 'I will' is in character moral—is a good man. But 'I ought,' and 'I will,' and 'character,' and 'good,' are spiritual terms—terms belonging to a being who, though overlapping, is lifted above the animal creation; belonging to a Person; to a being who, beside having matter and life and mind in his complex constitution, has also spirit. What heights and ranges of capacity there may be in man, over and above that which springs from his sense of responsibility, no one can tell, and no wise man will attempt to estimate.

The moral is the spiritual; but of course it is not the whole of the spiritual. It may be well at this point to indicate the relation of the part to the whole.

The revelation, by whatever means made, of God is Theology: the revelation of the Will of God for man is Ethics, which is an aspect of Theology. The response of man to the revelation of God is Religion: the response of man to the revelation of the Will of God for him is Morality, which is an aspect of Religion. The connecting link between Theology, in the stricter sense of the term, and Ethics is the revelation of the character of God which, supreme in Him, is the Fount of His Will for man: the connecting link between Religion, in the stricter sense of the term, and Morality is Worship which, response to God as God, is the Fount of obedience to the Will which is the outcome of His character. Hence, Morality, though not the whole of the spiritual, is the final outcome of the spiritual (only, of course, Morality must *be* Morality and not some carnal version of it): it is the outcome of the

spiritual in action, rendered to others because it is due to them. Morality is character : it is fidelity to duty : it is righteousness ; but all these are what they are out of the relationship which one bears to another : they are all forms of due-ness. Because God is what He is, and out of His character wills as He does : because other creatures are what they are : because I am what I am in my relation to God and those others ; therefore a certain attitude of spirit and certain conduct are due from me. This is Morality.

To resume. Faith is belief on moral (spiritual) grounds, to moral (spiritual) ends, and is itself a moral (spiritual) act. Belief concerning a supernatural fact, person or expectation that, however true in itself and sincere in the holder of it, is merely speculative, is not faith : it is, at most, the body of faith. The soul of faith is moral. A man might be fixed in the belief that there is a personal First Cause, and that human life extends beyond the grave, and yet might carry so little moral conviction into his creed, and draw so little moral inspiration from it, that an Atheist, who went about impressed with and obedient to the sense of moral obligation, should be more a man of faith than he. Another, by long study of theology and by dwelling in the atmosphere of its conclusions, might have worked the Nicene Creed into his moral constitution, and yet, through lack of a supreme moral purpose in his life, have no living faith in Christ. And another, again, enthusiastically committed to the doctrine of the Second Advent and to belief in its imminent nearness, might be so little occupied with the thought of that which gives these hopes their value to man, that one who rejected both beliefs in their literal significance, but hungered and thirsted for the reign of righteousness among man, might truly have more faith, in this very region, than he. Faith is belief, and it is reason ; but it is belief mainly based upon and induced by moral considerations, and it is reason whose conclusions are wholly spiritual. It is this moral quality in faith that makes its grounds so subtle and far-

reaching. Many a belief that apart from the moral might seem open to doubt or even incredible, takes its place as inevitable when brought within its range. To take, again, those first of all beliefs, the belief in the being of God and the proper immortality of man : there is much to be said, in these days especially, against as well as for them, in the region of the speculative intellect. The mysteries of modern science bewilder, and the tragedy of human history almost breaks the heart of, faith : but join to God and Immortality their great sister thought of Responsibility, and all is changed. ' Right. Duty. Conscience :—these of course,' says the man who insists upon being man : and given these God and Immortality follow. To be sure, there are, as it seems, conscientious men who are Atheists ; but such men could not be generated by a world given over to atheism ; their virtues are the product of the world's faith, and, it may well be, their unbelief is the product of the world's practical infidelity. It is safe to assume—for the experience of the overwhelming majority of good men would testify to the fact—that the invincible conviction of Right, and the unalterable determination to pursue righteousness, put the belief in God and the hope of immortality absolutely beyond question : the sense of responsibility is the practical demonstration of God and of Immortality.

It may be well to put the heart's argument a little more formally. Every good man holds himself to be responsible. To one who did not so hold himself, who held his so-called acts to be but the order or disorder of nature, God and Immortality would have no meaning. God might be : but *he* would have no relation to Him, and he would be but a *thing* in His hands : and as for Immortality, why should one variety of animal survive while others perish ? But every good man *does* hold himself to be responsible. He may have speculative doubts upon the matter : in his practical judgment he has none. He praises and blames both himself and others, and the fact proves his belief. ' But,' says he, ' if I am responsible, I am a person—I can will : moreover, if I

am responsible, there is an obligation outside me in relation to which I am responsible. And that there is an obligation outside me, and that I am a person, both point to a Person to whom I am responsible. *God is.* And, given that I am so constituted and so related, it is unthinkable that the accident of physical death should end me.' The man's moral sense generates his whole Christian creed. That the converse is true, that a man's faith in God and Immortality is the life-blood of his continuance in well-doing, is indeed also vitally true. This, however, is not the matter at present in hand.

§ 10

As all essential truth and all duty are beautiful, faith is the response of the heart to truth and the duty which is its outcome. To the beginner on the path of faith, 'I ought' is the sovereign utterance: as he advances on his road, his words rise to 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God'; while truth, which at first was solemn and difficult, becomes splendid and self-illuminative.

§ 11

Faith, though allied to, is distinct from, trust. Faith is the apprehension of truth: trust is repose on a person. To be sure, we often speak of having faith in a person; but that means that having a belief concerning him we, out of that belief, trust him. In our attitude towards God, indeed, we scarcely distinguish between faith and trust; yet even in that supreme case the trust presupposes the belief.

§ 12

While trust rests upon faith, it can in its turn greatly help faith. To learn of one who is already trusted does indeed create the danger of letting conviction go by default, or, if the teacher is justly regarded as infallible, of failing to examine what the truth received really amounts to.

But that danger being avoided, to learn truth of one who is already trusted is a great blessedness. Whether the trust rests upon belief in the teacher's moral quality, or upon the assurance of his teaching capacity, the trust itself is of the utmost value in the relation of teacher and taught. It gives the teacher an access to the taught not otherwise to be obtained, and creates in the taught that teachableness of spirit, that peace in looking the teaching in the face, without which it is impossible to learn aright. But, as has been implied, the trust must not be made to take the place of teaching or of the living address of the learner to the truth presented to him. A person or a corporation may be both qualified and authorised to teach, but the acceptance of the teaching in *mere* trust may mean the acceptance of words only, and may leave the learner no more enlightened and less alive than he was before. But if, using trust as his gracious passport, the teacher makes faith his goal, he may hope to do good work.

A father says to his child: 'I will tell you a truth. A plus B, squared, equals A squared plus B squared plus twice A times B: expressed in formula $(A + B)^2 = A^2 + B^2 + 2AB$. Do you believe that?'

'I believe *you*, father,' says the child, 'but I don't know what *that* means.'

'It means,' says the father, 'that if you take any two numbers, which you may call A and B, and, on the one hand, add the two numbers together and then square, that is, multiply by itself, the number obtained, the result will be the same as if, on the other hand, you square A, square B, and add both these squares to twice A times B.'

Having often and carefully enough gone over and explained this analytic assertion to make the child comprehend it, the father says:

'Do you understand?'

'Yes,' says the child.

'Then now you believe, not only me, but what I told you.'

'No,' says the child, 'I still only believe you, father;

for, though I understand what you say, I do not see it to be true : I do not *for myself* know whether it is true or not.'

'All right,' says the father, and proceeds to take an example. 'Choose two numbers ; any you please,' he says to the child.

The child chooses four and five.

'These,' says the father, 'stand for our A and B. Now, according to the formula, add them together. You get — ?'

'Nine,' says the child.

'Now,' says the father, 'according to the formula, square nine. You get — ?'

'Eighty-one,' says the child.

'This is on the one hand,' says the father. 'Now, on the other hand, according to the formula, square four. You get — ?'

'Sixteen.'

'And, according to the formula, square five. You get — ?'

'Twenty-five.'

'Then, according to the formula, take four times five and double the answer. You get — ?'

'Forty.'

'Finally, according to the formula, add the sixteen, the twenty-five and the forty. You get — ?'

'It's eighty-one,' says the child with amused delight, laughing up into the father's mock-solemn face.

'Let us put it into a formula,' he says.

$$(4 + 5)^2 = 4^2 + 5^2 + 2 (4 \times 5) ;$$

that is : $9^2 = 4^2 + 5^2 + 2 (4 \times 5) ;$

that is : $81 = 16 + 25 + 40 ;$

that is : $81 = 81.$

At which the child beams jubilant again.

'Now,' says the father, oracularly, 'you see that A plus B, squared, equals A squared plus B squared plus twice A times B.'

'Yes,' says the child, who has already been taught to

keep her eyes open. 'It is so if A means four and B means five. But would it be the same if you took any other two numbers?'

'Try two others.'

Two others are taken, with the same result as before.

'Now,' says the father, 'is it true that A plus B, squared, equals A squared plus B squared plus twice A times B?'

'Yes,' says the child.

'How do you know?' says the father, whose innings it now is. 'You have only tried two pairs of numbers. Might it not be different if you took a third pair?'

'I don't think so,' says the child.

The father is relentless, however; and a third pair is tried.

'Now try a fourth,' says the father; and a fourth pair is tried.

'Will that do?' says the father.

'Yes, I think so,' says the child slyly.

'Now you believe me,' says the father.

'I always did,' says the child.

'And you understand what I first said.'

'Yes,' says the child.

'And you, *for yourself*, believe it to be true.'

'Yes,' says the child.

Upon which the parent and child embrace, and a veil is drawn over the picture.

Father and child might well embrace; for, except that such a bit of teaching would scarcely be an isolated event, they have passed through a great experience. The child has learned to ponder, search into, words, until she has got at their meaning; she has a little more built upon a person, a divinely appointed teacher; she has apprehended a truth by a direct personal belief in it.

Of course the child's belief in this case is not faith, because the subject matter of it is not spiritual truth. It is but intellectual apprehension helped on by personal trust. But all good teaching is the same in its method, and every spiritual truth has its intellectual form; so that

had the father been teaching his child religion, he would equally have aimed at bringing the child into immediate discernment of the truth he was seeking to impart.

Until the teacher arrives at such a result, the true end of teaching is not attained. Much short of this may have its uses ; blind trust ; the acceptance of mere formulae ; the reception of a doctrine, understood but untested, may all have a moral and therefore beneficent element in them. But full belief and, in the sphere of the spiritual, full faith can be wrought by teaching, as far as *its* part is concerned, only if that teaching is addressed to its highest end.

It may be thought that the example that has been used is an illustration of the arrival at knowledge, in the absolute sense of the word, instead of belief, but it is not so. In the process of the child's conviction, everything turns upon the integrity and competence of the father and the intelligence of the little one. But the child does not *know* that its own intellectual discernments are to be trusted, nor does it *know* that its father is wise and upright. No persons are more convinced of their own wisdom than madmen ; and plausibility is a fact in the world, however much the child would resent its attribution to her father. We *believe* that average men, and we among the rest, are averagely sane and rational, and we go on believing it because the belief works. We believe, and especially good children believe, that men who carry themselves as good fathers carry themselves are, as far as their intentions are concerned, absolutely trustworthy in their intercourse with their children. These convictions are moral certainties to us ; but they are certainties because of the intensity of our belief in them, not because they are arrived at by any other process than that by which beliefs in general are reached.

§ 13

Faith, then, is belief ; not absolute knowledge, which in every sphere is impossible to man : it is belief on substantial and considered grounds, not mere credulity or

torpid acquiescence : it is an activity of the purified and divinely illumined reason, not a gift received in passivity : it is belief in the sphere of the spiritual, and in that sphere it is belief in truth : it is, though akin to, yet distinct from, personal trust, and in that distinctness it is in its fulness elicited not by dogma, which appeals to trust, but by teaching : it is an act based on moral grounds to moral ends, and is, therefore, as soon as it becomes possible, a duty : finally, it is directly assisted by love of goodness which, though distinct from faith, does, if it is severely maintained against all entanglements, help to the discernment or even the discovery of the root of truth of which goodness is the fruit.

BOOK II
THE OBJECTIVES OF FAITH

Two precautions, and a preliminary statement to be borne in mind throughout this Book.

The Objectives grouped and stated.

The doctrines underlying Physical Science:

‘ The Universe ’ ;

‘ Laws of Nature ’ ;

‘ Development ’ ;

three existences whose being suggests something or some person behind them.

What we, in faith, call GOD.

Thus Science and Theology have the relation of body and spirit.

The great doctrine of Evolution needs to be rationalised.

Sense of distance between God and the Universe as long as the answer is sought in the region of the *understanding*.

What says Reason ?

‘ The Universe has been caused, and it has been caused by a Person.’

Two truths : (a) That God can will ; (b) and can and does will only in love.

The nature of Divine Love : Well-being. Character.

The Evolution doctrine and its companion truth shew one aspect of the Love of God.

BOOK II

THE OBJECTIVES OF FAITH

Two precautions may be useful here :

1. The understanding is not the sphere of faith. In the *spirit* faith works.

2. Faith is an act : it is a condition of spirit.

These are scarcely distinct, the second naturally leads to the first, where the thing is Truth, and the seeker a seeker after Truth.

Faith is the attitude of a truth-seeker's mind and spirit towards some thing or doctrine. There must be this objective : faith cannot stand in the abstract. It may be discussed in the abstract, but there cannot be actual faith without an object concerning which truth is believed. It is therefore desirable to enquire what are the objectives possible, things being as they are and men being what they are.

The objectives of faith—assuming faith to be a reality and the objectives true—may perhaps be grouped thus :

1. The doctrines underlying Physical Science.

2. The objectives of Theism :

(a) The existence of a First Cause and Ultimate Source of all things and of all activities, save, in the case of these latter, what are produced by sin.

(b) The Personality of the First Cause and Ultimate Source.

(c) The personality of man, notwithstanding that he is, in one region of his being, a part of Nature (using 'Nature' in the narrower sense, that is, in the sense in which it is used in Physical Science).

- (d) Not only the First Cause of all things, but the Father of the spirits of men.
- (e) Man, in his personality, is a moral being—is capable of character.
- (f) God has also character, however far short of the full meaning 'character' as applied to Him may be.
- (g) God, as a Being of Character, and as Father of the spirits of men who, being personal, are capable of character, is the Judge as well as the Father of men.
- (h) Man, as being a moral person, is capable of, and has set before him the hope of, Immortality.

3. The objectives of Christianity.

The first of these primary objectives is simple and therefore admits of no analysis: the last of them, namely Christianity, will be analysed hereafter.

To take, now, the doctrines underlying Physical Science.

Prior, in the order of thought and in some measure in the order of experience, to the moral (spiritual) life is the intellectual.

This intellectual life grows out of, is based upon, a primary consciousness which we call sense-consciousness. This sense-consciousness would be by itself infertile, did not we, under compulsion of our mental constitution, incorporate with it two assumptions. (1) (If this be an assumption, as some hold) that there is a self, an individual being, who experiences the consciousness. (2) That there are objects other than self which produce the consciousness, and thereby also reveal themselves. The result we express by the term *sense-perception*, and upon this we build, or out of this grows, the fabric of our intellectual life. Are we fools or sane persons? Are our sense-perceptions valid? Is our conviction that *we are*, and that *the outer world is*, a substantial ground for our intellectual life? Are these true objectives of faith?

Everyone believes that they are, though some deny it. But those who deny it believe it in the practical judgment, denying it only in the speculative intellect. The

intellectual life is built upon truths denied by some but believed by all. The truths invincibly assert themselves, compelling faith, though the faith may live side by side with speculative doubt. This brings to light a subsidiary root of intelligence which may be called *unconscious faith*, the invincible belief in the veracity of primary convictions. As the child grows out of mere infancy, it is absolutely convinced of its own existence and the existence of the world around it ; and to the child's conviction all men in their practical judgment say Amen. In other words, intelligence grows out of two roots, experience and faith. We experience only the forms of consciousness : the faith makes the experience fertile. That our faith is sane is proved by the fact that the whole thing works. Did men practically doubt the reality of knowledge, the existence of subject and object, either they would go mad, or they would sink into that absolute check-mate of action which would be the logical outcome of their disbelief. They do neither because they believe ; and rationality is clenched by the experience of life. That which we cannot help believing, and which works, is true, we say.

Formal Science, which counts itself to be, *par excellence*, the region of *Knowledge*, is built like the rest upon faith—upon that which, in the intellect, can be no more than believed. To say this is to cast no reproach upon science : it is but to state that it is a human achievement. In the deepest sense, as has been said, man cannot know except the contents of his own consciousness : he can but believe. And although scientific men would not always accept the tribute, it belongs to the highest praise of science that it thus, with firm tread, walks by faith. The suggestion, ' Perhaps there is not any outer world to be studied, or any proper "you" to study it,' it simply ignores. It takes for granted the inevitable assumptions of the human mind, and counts that the Universe is certainly sane. Scientific men may, of course, be speculative philosophers as well as investigators ; but in their work as men of science they pass by the scepticism which, if it were truly held, would

make life and science impossible. Herein science is at one with religion, which also takes the inevitable assumptions of the human mind for granted, starting from them and counting that the Universe is certainly sane.

Understanding and reason have convinced the human race that the things of the world around us are realities. The incessant scrutiny of and meditation upon the system of things have led us further to the conception expressed by 'the Universe' and still further scrutiny and meditation have shown us characteristics which we express by the 'Laws of Nature' and Development. These Laws may be defined by their description as forms of constancy in relation of antecedents and consequents; and by Development we mean that the Universe has gone on to be more than it once was, and is going on to be still more. To think this matter aright, one must free one's mind entirely from the notion that laws here mean commands asking for obedience: *things* cannot obey: persons only can do this. The laws are simply the expressions of observed constancy. This would be the whole truth upon the matter if only science were in question. But we must think of the uniformities as *caused*, and causation requires a person. Cause and effect when applied to phenomena are misused: antecedents and consequents are the proper expressions for these things and their relation to each other. But the antecedents and consequents are themselves caused, though the cause may lie far back behind those effects which we erroneously call *causes*. Similarly, development, if described as the spontaneous outcome of that from which the development proceeded, is erroneously described. No thing can give rise to a higher thing than itself. The new thing may have the seeming of being caused by that out of which it arises, but the reason asserts that this uncaused arising is an impossibility.

We have thus three existences whose being suggests some thing, or, to talk rationally, some person (or persons) behind them. The Universe thus suggests what we, in faith, call GOD. The ancients, of the West, at all events,

scarcely rose to this conception. Their trivial 'gods' broke the system of things into parts, each several god being the cause and lord of the parts which belonged to it. But we have arrived at the idea GOD, and the vastness of that idea sets before us the problem of attempting to answer all the questions which its mystery calls out. The belief in God is of faith—is of that belief in things which are incapable of proof to the understanding but are necessities of reason and conscience. Thus Science and Theology, though utterly distinct, have that relation to each other which might be described as the relation of body and spirit. Similarly, the laws of nature, thought of as strict science, leave us meditating the insoluble mystery of their origin. But if we think of them philosophically, and through this theologically, another definition of these laws may be found. We may say that a law of nature is a constancy in the mode of divine operation in that region of God's activity. It is not any more than before a matter of command and obedience: things cannot obey or be commanded: it is in both cases a thing of God we are studying: in the one case, of His immediate operation; in the other case, farther on results of that operation producing what we call 'second causes.' And, once again, though development, self-originating, is an impossibility, yet we find it perfectly reasonable if we think that that out of which the development seems to arise is that through which the development takes place; but the operation is the outcome of a hidden spiritual action, the immediate act of God. Make this clear, and the great doctrine of Evolution is rationalised. That a thing of the most elementary character should, out of its own resources, give birth to the first step leading up to the multitudinous varieties and potencialities of the Universe, is incredible; but that God, working through that protoplasmic, infinitesimal, should take that course which irrational flippancy attributes to the Protoplasm, is as credible as every one of the mysteries of God.

The vastness of the physical Universe, the pervasion of

that Universe by law, the mysterious advance of the order of that Universe by the never-halting evolution of new forms—all these point to, if they do not absolutely prove, the being of a First Cause. But God, so proved, might not be in His nature beyond those things with which He is associated by His Creatorship. Such a Divine would fall utterly below what *we* mean by God. Can God be proved by arguments of that higher order which we need to establish our assurance? It must be confessed that there are no considerations or facts which can be addressed to the *understanding* that prove God in this greater conception of His being and activity. If such proofs were attainable, they would be found in that larger and deeper knowledge of the Universe which we call Science. But Science, side by side with our heightened conceptions of what God must be, if He is, intensifies the sense of the distance between Him and the Universe. Polytheism was an easy belief to them that held it: the objects of Nature being, as they conceived, distinct, and the mystical powers displaying themselves in these objects, it was easy to imagine a god for each object. But we who explore, not imagine, find God nowhere in Nature as far as the understanding is concerned. The First Cause is always beyond us. It might be said, indeed, that so also is gravitation beyond us. We no more know what lies behind the phenomena of gravitation (although the uninformed when they use the word 'attraction' think that they do) than we *know*, scientifically speaking, what lies behind Nature as a whole. But two negatives do not make a positive, and our ignorance of the mode of the divine contact with the Universe causes that we cannot reach God through the processes of scientific exploration. As we reach life, understanding and rationality, we seem more nearly to touch God; but the conception of Evolution, and the long ages which have passed during which things have been reaching their present condition, tend to push Him into remoteness. And when we come to still deeper knowledge of the inorganic universe, in which the equivalency of every new expression of

Energy is known to be but a translation of previous forms of that Energy, and where every known consequent follows upon an antecedent which is no more God or the immediate action of God than the consequent is, we seem to be immersed, not in Personality but in mechanism. Moreover, it would be playing with truth and with ourselves did we ignore the fact that in the Universe there are, not mysteries, simply, but difficulties, which suggest that it is by blind power, not by a Person, that the Universe is moved. The triviality and evanescence and repulsiveness and injuriousness of many forms of organic life, the seeming lavish waste of miracles of wonder and beauty, and the apparent purposelessness of the whole animal creation, which lives but to eat and reproduce its kind, suggest rather the operation of a blind power than the action of an all-wise Creator.

So stands the response of the senses and the understanding to the demand for faith in God as a Person who, of His own will and with intelligent purpose, is the Author of all that is. That the response is not a denial surely is certain. What is known to every man, and still more what is known to the man of science, raises the presumption that God is. But there are difficulties and perplexities which are insoluble, and faith is dimmed and the mind of man is bewildered by these difficulties and perplexities as long as their solution is sought in the region of the understanding. But now, is there any further appeal? not to speak of the conscience, for we are still dealing with the first of the two assumptions into which the whole great question falls. There is the reason. What says Reason to faith in God as a Person who, of His own will and intelligent purpose, is the Author of all that is?

He who has gone with the argument of this book thus far has concluded, as most men do without thinking, and as all men do in their practical judgment, that the Universe is an objective reality. He has also recognised the vastness, complexity, mystery, and unity of the Universe now known to man as it never was before. That such a Universe

exists without having had a cause, he finds to be absurd - absurd, not by the test of some speculative notion which might be used to argue that the conception of God as uncaused is also absurd, but by the test of universal experience throughout the length and breadth of nature, and of the fundamental working conceptions of science. All that he knows of nature teaches him that consequents have always their antecedents ; and as no antecedent for the Universe as a whole can be found within the Universe, he is bound to infer One outside it and above it, its Creator and Fount. Men in all former times and in all places have assumed a spiritual behind the material ; *we* differ from them only in knowing the vastness and complexity and mystery and unity of the Natural, so that the notion ' gods ' is driven out by the doctrine ' God.' This is the spiritual advance of man side by side with and out of his intellectual advance. To be sure, modern notions have arisen in Christendom which assert that the Universe is uncaused, or even that it never had a beginning, and that the present order of things is but a phase or stage in an eternal cyclical evolution. It is enough, in answer to these notions, to say that they are, at all events, no more scientific than they are theological ; their native home is the East, where men imagine rather than observe and infer. Science asserts that that which *is* has been caused, and for the doctrine of cyclical evolution there is no more warrant in observation than in reason. The notion is a mere guess or an echo, though it filches a certain amount of credit, as does also the ' promise and potency ' theory, from its association in name with the genuine Evolution theory of science, which is an all-but-completed induction from observed facts. Science knows nothing but of the present order of things, its proximate beginnings and its threatened end. How the beginning took place, or of what is to happen after its end, no rational conjecture can be imagined if God be excluded.

The Universe, we conclude, has been caused ; and it has been caused by a Person. For though antecedents

may be mere phenomena along which change of mode in the Universe may be produced, *cause*, that is, the bringing into being of that which was not, can only be effected by a Person. Moreover, the fact (disputed in the speculative intellect, but confessed by all in the practical judgment, except the utterly base) that there are persons in the Universe proves that the Universe is from a Person ; for that the Universe should be able, out of its own resources, to bring forth beings of a higher order than its whole self without them, is irrational. He who meditates his own nature, convinced that he can truly will, and who finds an uncaused Universe an absurdity, will believe that He whom we describe as the First Cause, and whom, with meanings radiating out into immeasurable significance, we name ' God,' is a Person.

These fundamental truths are followed up by two other truths, less logically imperative, it may be, but humanly immensely more precious. These truths are : (1) That God can will ; (2) That God in His power to will can and does will only in love. The first of these is complicated by the fact that others created by God can also will, and that they can will in opposition to the divine will. The question this suggests is, of course, beyond us, but we can conjecturally imagine a world pervaded by God, by those who love Him and delight to pursue His aims, and by evil persons who do not even remain as enemies in passivity, but go out to pursue the conflict with God and His faithful ones. Moving amongst this world, we can think that Right befriends the friends of God, and opposes His enemies. All these—God, His allies, His enemies, spirit of Right, and the spirit of Evil—are in freedom ; that when the battle has raged, and the results have come into form, the triumph of Right may be so absolute that no counter voice is any more possible. In other words : God accepts the power that He has given men, and holds them free to act upon their own terms as they will, the final result being, not simply out of God's power, but out of the victory of His righteous wisdom, that is, Love.

Now, what are the grounds for this belief?

There is one contingent argument for this faith that stands on the threshold. If a man were convinced that God is not love, he would have to be an Atheist, would have to surrender that intellectual faith in God at which we seem to have arrived. This necessity did not lie upon men at all times: it was once possible for a man to believe that God, or at least the gods, including the Supreme God, could at the same time exist and yet be indifferent or even cruel to men. This possibility does not exist for us. A man may be an Atheist, and then of course no question of divine love arises for him. But *we*, as long as we believe in God, must believe in His love. We are convinced that 'God' and 'unlove' make a contradiction in terms. Christianity has taught us this—has taught this even to those among us who do not call themselves Christians; has taught it even to those who call themselves Atheists. There are, therefore, not two questions: Is there God? and Is God loving? but *Is there Divine Love?*

Where, then, is the proof of Divine Love?

The sweet nursery answer would be: The world is beautiful: the inhabitants of it are very happy—except some who are suffered to be sad that others may have the blessedness of being kind to them—God is love. This nursery answer one may come across any day, and of course it warms the heart. You take a picked June morning: the home of a country gentleman, with its spacious house and well-kept garden and lawns: a fair child rolling on the grass: the mother and father joy-filled in their mutual love, and beaming their happiness upon the little one: an old pensioner coming up the path, and tendering salutations of undoubted sincerity and warmth to the parents and child. Is not God Love? and does not the child know it?

But he who comes across this nursery answer knows the large world—knows the misery, the degradation, the baseness, the profound selfishness, the unutterable cruelty spread over the greater part of the earth's surface: knows it all so well that, were not Atheism absurd, and did not

something in his own being forbid such a conclusion, he in his moments of deepest thought and intensest feeling would be tempted to say—‘ There is no Large Love : there is no God.’ And stopping short of this terrible conclusion, he must needs ask : ‘ Where is the love of God ? ’

But however overwhelming the difficulties, we are forced by the logic of the Universe and of our own being to believe that God is Love. As, because an uncaused Universe is unthinkable, and there must therefore be an ultimate Fount of all things, a First Cause of all activities ; as causation, in the sense of the word, is the work of a person and of a person only ; and as man who is a part of the Universe is a person—we must believe that the First Cause is, in a manner wholly transcending our experience of personality, a Person : so, because we, parts of the Universe, the offspring of God, are at our best love, we must believe that God is Love. If our logic fails us here, it fails us concerning the whole doctrine of God.

In order to conceive aright what may be, what must be, the nature of divine love, we must replace in our minds the thought of happiness and all lower thoughts of that order, by the thought, Well-being, whatever that may amount to. And we must realise that the highest order of well-being is that which is possible to a person, rational, able to will, acquainted with right and wrong, and determined at all costs to do the right. We know of many forms of well-being lower than this—the enjoyment of an animal, for instance—but we know of nothing higher. Character is the supreme well-being ; and however many lower forms divine love may devise and impart, the chief object of God must be a Universe containing and ruled over by beings of worthy character. This truth gives us the key by which we may in some measure analyse our conception of the love of God.

The love of God and divine love whenever it is found in man, may perhaps be tentatively set forth as follows. It is :

1. An active desire for the well-being of another in the highest kind and degree possible to that other.

2. Pain when this other fails to possess the desired well-being.

3. Willingness to sacrifice self in the seeking of that well-being for the other.

4. Willingness to give pain to that other if this is necessary to his true well-being.

5. Willingness to give pain to some who will not be directly benefited by the pain, but whose suffering will promote the well-being of the other in question, or of some larger whole of which all these are parts. In this last case, love would take care that the suffering was limited in kind and degree; while the sufferer, if he understood and were right-minded, would consent to the suffering indicated.

6. Willingness to efface those who have been proved to be incapable of eternal well-being in themselves and of eternal usefulness in the Universe.

7. It is consistent with love in the moral Governor of the Universe that those who have become incapable of eternal life, through their wilful wickedness and impenitence, should suffer in being effaced, and suffer in proportion to their sin. *Vengeance* would seem to the moral consciousness to be a reality, however incapable men may be of executing it.

8. It is consistent with the love of God, in view of final results for the Universe at large, that pain and loss should ensue upon every violation of divine order, whether done wilfully or in ignorance. If, however, the cause were ignorance and not wilfulness, we could not, of course, connect the thought of punishment with the pain and loss. Probably, our wisdom would be to say always 'consequence,' leaving the word 'punishment' in the hands of God.

It would seem, then, that that which makes for evolution and character, that which makes for intenser life, larger beauty, and loftier righteousness, in the Universe and in the individual, is consistent with divine love, is the outcome of divine love, whatever incidental pain may accompany the progress of the divine purpose.

Is there the working of such a divine love visible in the Universe, and particularly in the human world, as we know them?

The animal world is haunted by pain and death. The pain, exceptional in the life of an animal in the natural state—and it is of this state that we speak—and uncomplicated for the most part by mental elements, cannot be regarded as serious, and it may be an instrument of evolution. The death was a necessity of the condition of things, for had all the animals that have ever been born survived, the surface of the earth would be crammed with masses of animals unable to obtain the means of living, and evolution would be out of the question. The fuss about death in the animal world is clearly unnecessary. Of course, the good God would not, nor would any good man, cause an iota of pain or extinguish a living form wantonly. But if there is a use in the pain or the death, no challenge of the love of God can be made on the grounds of their existence among the animals in their natural state.

Man also has to battle with nature and with the temporary character of his organisation, and succumbs at last to death. His battle with nature is often very grim. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, storms, droughts, sweep away thousands, and reduce millions, it may be, to starvation, after consternation of fear or the pangs of hunger.

Now, there can be no doubt that, in proportion as it is realised, this picture calls up troubled questions concerning divine love. Are there any answers to these questions? Some would say that the conflict with nature was necessary to call out the natural faculties of man. Others, again, would say that in the worst extremity man's sufferings make for the evolution, not of the race—that is evolved—but of character in man. That the struggle with nature calls out human faculties, there can be no doubt. Only, the struggle must be on something like equal terms: to be at the *mercy* of the elements is another matter. That man's sorrows and difficulties tend to the evolution of character, there can be no doubt. But when the troubles amount to

a sudden earthquake, or volcanic eruption, to an epidemic or to a ghastly famine that dooms men to death by slow exhaustion, the matter is different. Even then, we cannot deny that in the momentary agony or in the slow death some stirring of the human spirit, some access of divine grace, may take place. The case before us is so tremendous that it is impossible to imagine that anyone could be taught to believe in the love of God by the contemplation of it : the hope is that he who does believe in divine love will be able to hold on to his faith in spite of those arguments of fact that preach against it.

There is one aspect of the love of God (that is, of His purpose, which is love) that has only in recent times come into view. This is the doctrine of Evolution. It is impossible in these days to think of the constitution of man without thinking, also, of his origin ; and with our present knowledge it is impossible to believe that the human race was created *ab ovo*. The resemblances of man's organisation to that of the animals below him ; the correspondence between his embryonic development and theirs, and the doctrine of Evolution which has conquered our belief, compel us to the conclusion that man, in one aspect of his being, derives from that organic stock from which all animals come. But that constitution of man which we have been contemplating refuses to be regarded as an elevated form of animal sense and understanding. While acknowledging the truth of his evolutionary derivation, we seem to find ourselves driven, by the higher aspects of his being, to some doctrine of special creation such as those which science has utterly rejected. The difficulty, however, is but apparent, and is removed by the recognition of that companion truth without which the doctrine of Evolution is false. The Evolution doctrine asserts that each new form of being arises, by gradual becoming, out of forms earlier than it : the companion truth is, that nothing can give rise to a form of being higher than itself out of its own resources. That man can only be accounted for, in the totality of his being, by an operation of God without which

his organic progenitors would have remained not men, is but the loftiest example of that truth which is involved in the whole story, rightly told, of Evolution. Through what *was* there arises what *is* ; but what *is* proceeds, not from what *was* but from what *was* and a further operation of God. It is, indeed, not to be assumed (though it cannot be disproved) that all the beings whom the naturalist would have called men *were* men. It may be that in the course of the long evolutionary advance there came a time when the human temple was all but completed, while yet the god was not brought in. Such, imaginably, may be the ' man ' of geologic times. But at all events, there are *men* now, or, if there are not, religion, whatever God in Himself might be, is a dream. Theism, speaking in the light of our present knowledge, says that from the time of man's remotest physical ancestor, brother to the still existing Amœba, there has proceeded by incessant divine reinforcements the advance by which man has been made. Through the latest step of that great advance, a being has come into existence who is *a person*, able to reason and to will, conscious of moral responsibility, capable of the knowledge of God, and destined for Immortality. Thus man, whatever else he may be, is a spiritual being, related not simply to the First Cause, but to the Father of the spirits of men.

BOOK III
(PARENTHETICAL)
GRAVE HINDRANCES

The great impediments which are apt to keep thoughtful men in these days from an unprejudiced examination of Christianity.

The impediments stated: The third being the *Miraculous Element in Christianity*.

Limitations of Physical Science and Theism.

Christianity asserts the entrance into the world of a Personality Divine and Human.

What powers would He have ?

The miracle whose reality is vital to the claims of Christianity is the transformation of the character and life.

Is Christ unproved ?

Is faith in Christ a moral act ?

BOOK III

GRAVE HINDRANCES

THE work next before us is to meditate in some detail the articles of the Christian Faith, with a view to realising the question of their competence to commend themselves to the conscience, reason, and affections of truth-seeking and virtue-loving men ; and any postponement of the task is of doubtful wisdom. Yet there are persons who, at this point, would decline to pursue the enquiry unless something were first done to remove certain *primâ facie* objections that have taken possession of many minds. The writer therefore decides, though with hesitation, to interpose, between that which has already been done and that which is to be done, this Book dealing with the difficulties referred to. He asks, however, that the parenthetical nature of the Book shall be kept in mind, and that the Book that follows shall be thought of as waiting at the door to take up the subject as it was left by Book II.

The great impediments which are apt to keep thoughtful men in these days from an unprejudiced examination of Christianity are the beliefs that :

- (1) Christianity is—what it is not.
- (2) In order to be Christians, men have to commit themselves to certain specific doctrines of Inspiration, the Authority of the Scriptures, and the Authority of the Church.
- (3) Science has made the miraculous element in Christianity incredible.
- (4) Christianity has failed.

It is the hope of the writer that something like satisfactory answers can be given to these initial difficulties. Should such prove to be the case, though nothing positive will have been established, a way may have been opened for the consideration of those things in which demonstration can be found, if such things exist.

The first difficulty will be removed if Christianity can be shown to be, not what it is coarsely misrepresented as being, but rather what the best men, who as yet stand apart, would be rejoiced to be convinced that it is. No lover of truth will think it presumptuous that he who writes humbly hopes that these pages may contribute something towards the deeply-to-be-desired consummation.

The answer to the second difficulty is that no such necessity exists: that in order to be Christians, men have, and only have, by whatever means, to believe in Christ as the Incarnate Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Confessedly, this belief is more tremendous than the other, but it is a belief of an entirely different order. Those beliefs are technical: this, if the Incarnation is a fact, is transcendent in its nature and profoundly moral in its genesis. All questions of Inspiration, of Scripture Authority, are in-church questions—very important as such, but questions which have no right to be forced upon the attention of one who is enquiring concerning the faith; questions upon which he has no power of forming an opinion; questions which have no interest for him until he believes in the Christ. Even for the established Christian, these questions follow, rather than lead. The childish argument that Christ is the Son of God because the Bible says so, does not represent the sequence of his faith: rather he believes the Bible because it contains the vision of the Christ. It is true that the attack of a generation ago upon the historic value of the New Testament documents troubled him, and that he is glad that it is being met and answered; but no literary documents can prove Christianity, and he builds upon a deeper foundation than they are. To ask a man to convince himself of the divine infallibility of the Scriptures, as a means and condition

of his acceptance of the Faith of Christ, is to ask him to take a candle to hunt for a sunbeam. Of course, if a man wants to know what Christianity is, he will study the Scriptures ; but, if he is wise, he will read them as he would read any other book upon a matter so solemn and difficult. The Scriptures as a means of grace come to him later : to the enquirer they are a witness of what the Faith is, not an authority for that Faith. Christianity, to be truly received, must shine by its own light.

So also it is with Church Authority. No instructed Christian man has any inclination to cheapen the blessed vision of the Universal Church ; and what that Church holds, he would be loth to doubt, and would entirely refuse to deny. To him, the Church Universal—would that eyes could see it in its unity !—is a teaching Mother, distributing to her children the Truth which her Lord by the Holy Ghost has given to her. But to the enquirer she is a witness, and her true work is not to beat down by authority, but to convince by opening out the effulgence of that Truth which then could, surely, fail to find entrance only into eyes that loved darkness rather than light.

We come now to the third of the hindrances to faith that press upon some minds, the belief, namely, that Science has made the miraculous element in Christianity incredible, and that it has done this by demonstrating the presence of law in Nature. In attempting to face this contention, it will be well to start a little further back than the specific point that has to be eventually considered.

There can be no doubt that Science has compelled us to believe that, through all the activities of the Universe, Law prevails. By this, whatever its attitude to miracles may be, no issue with Theism is raised. Theism, indeed, asserts that all the activities of the Universe are due to the Will of God ; but between these two there is no antagonism. The account given by science is phenomenal—is report of what *is* : that given by Theism is causative. A 'law of Nature,' in science (as has been already said), is a general formula of the observed constant sequence of phenomena, of the fixed relation between antecedents and

consequents ; and the more comprehensive doctrine of science that *everywhere* law prevails, though it cannot be verified by observation, so appeals to the reason upon the basis of what has been observed, that it is irresistible. The 'law of Nature' (of science), translated into the language of Theism, becomes a formula expressing the constant modes of divine operation, the uniform manner in which the divine will fulfills itself. Law is not denied, but accounted for.

Recent times have added to the possessions of science the knowledge that in the history of the Universe there have been advances by which new forms of being have been brought into existence, new activities have manifested themselves, and new or at least more complex laws have come into view. This, also, is to a certain extent a statement concerning known phenomena ; and, in-as-far as it is more, its appeal to the reason is convincing. We all, now-a-days, believe in Evolution. But Theism again interposes with a doctrine of Cause : new forms, new activities, new laws, have come into being, it says ; but they have done so because the operation of God has advanced ; because the Will of God has moved on to a further purpose, and, therefore, to further means. Here, again, there is no antagonism. Science, as such, does not affirm God in the matter : it has not the power to do so : its revelation is, indeed, concerning what *is* ; but that the assertion of what is excludes a doctrine of God and His workings as the cause of what is, no one would be foolish enough to maintain.

Moreover, the doctrine of Evolution, especially when understood as the doctrine of advance in the purpose and activities of God, liberates us from the notion that what has been—it and no more—must always be ; that the laws of the present, uncomplexed by the entrance of new factors, are, like the principles of righteousness, eternal. God will not grow chaotic, we are sure ; but He is not bound by the past : He will ever be doing more, and in doing more He may seem to do differently. Differently,

He will do, in the sense that the *modes* of an activity are determined by the activity. Each phase and stage of the divine working will have its own laws, however akin those laws may be. Analogies between the laws of the lower and the laws of the higher may be real, but you can never adequately express the higher in the terms of the lower. 'Natural Law in the Spiritual World' is nonsense.

The essence of Theism is the doctrine of God, of His Personality, of His will; but it also affirms the existence of created personalities who, also, can will. Without these, though God might be, religion could not be. In the region of created personalities, however, the voice of science drops to *pianissimo* or becomes quite silent. Personality, the creature will, lies outside her range; cannot be found by her methods any more than can God. It is no fault in science; but it is a limitation that imperatively demands to be recognised. With the creature personality, there enter into the phenomena of those parts of the Universe complications which Physical Science is entirely unable to interpret. It is not the vagaries of creature impulse which are in question: these might sort off with the similar though lower impulses of animals. It is the potentialities of the will proper that create the mystery.

So far, Theism carries us. But Christianity asserts the entrance into the world of a Personality not simply Divine, and not simply Human, certainly, but Divine-Human. What activities, what laws of those activities, shall manifest themselves with the entrance of this Person? It is clearly impossible, before experience, to forecast, and clearly absurd to determine *à priori* what He shall be able to do. If even man can so modify the activities of the Universe that Natural Sequence cannot account for the things that happen through him, what shall the Divine Man be able to do? It is obviously a question of experience—of experience arrived at by a judgment free from prejudice and quickened by spiritual discernment.

It is by the tendency to pass by Personality, Will; to regard Law as, so to say, substantive and self-existent

instead of as a mode of divine authority ; and advances in the order of things as a mere process of becoming, instead of as a result of a progressive acting of God, that scientific men are apt to be disqualified for an open-minded address to the question of miracles. The weakness is, of course, partly the defect of their acquirements. Every man tends to develop the muscles that he uses. Nor must the value of the services that Science has rendered to religion be forgotten in the recognition of its limitations. Science is deficient in the idea of God ; but it is rich in conceptions that would help to make the idea of Him more adequate. Concerning God in His moral quality, man must learn through his conscience ; but concerning the scale of His wisdom and power, Science is the great teacher, and no teachings are more profound than those of Evolution and Law. Moreover, she above all teachers, save the highest in the spiritual region, has helped to cleanse the mind of Christendom of superstition, that is, of false belief in the supernatural. And though, in doing this, she has tended to make belief in miracles more difficult, by convincing us that the great majority of the events, supposed by men through the ages to be examples of physical phenomena, brought about by non-physical antecedents, have been in that supposition misunderstood, she has also, and indeed thereby, elevated the conception of a miracle and of belief therein. If her teaching tends to the suggestion that the supposed miraculous is always an unreality, or, at least, sternly urges the duty of the utmost caution in receiving reports that affirm the miraculous, even so we need not greatly complain. Of the duty of the caution, there can be no doubt, and to have it pressed home upon us tends to our purification in that region where imagination and sentiment are apt to play havoc with veracity and sanity of thought.

Still, teacher though she is, science has her lessons to learn and her deficiencies to make up. She has to play both teacher and pupil ; and in this she is like her great rival or opponent, who is in fact neither the one nor the

other, but her great complement ; for Theology has also both to teach and to learn in this region. Until the two teachers have come to understand each other, and to accept each what the other has to give, we shall have no peace. The theologian has to learn, and to take into his inmost habits of thought, the truth that the idea 'law' is not antagonistic to but is a completion of the idea 'God' ; while the man of science has to be equally convinced that the idea 'law' interpreted by the idea 'personality' and incorporated with the fact of cosmic progress by the operation of God, is patient of, and more than patient of, the idea of 'miracles' properly understood.

First, for the theologian. That there is no caprice in Nature, science has taught us. What we now have to learn is that there is no caprice in God, and that every question of miracles is a question of *Him*. As long as we think of miracles as 'exceptional events,' as 'suspensions of the laws of Nature,' we are very near to paganism and superstition. To make miracles rationally credible—credible out of the reason, that is, not merely out of inference from former experience—we must believe that they are as natural (using the word 'Nature' in that more comprehensive sense in which it means not the order of the physical, merely, but the divine order of things in its entirety) as the phenomena of Nature, in the narrower sense of the word. So thought of, the miraculous comes to be regarded as a sign and result of a divine entrance, fuller than any that has been heretofore experienced. Against the miraculous, so thought of, there can be no prejudice: its reality is simply a question of fact: of the divine modes of operation under conditions of which we have had no former experience, we cannot judge.

And next, for the man of science. That there have been accessions of the Divine—changes not accounted for by the contents of the things changed or of their environment—in the history of things, everyone who does not deny the Divine altogether, or who has not lost his head over 'potentially present' and 'promise and potency' notions,

would admit ; and that these accessions have, sometimes at least, resulted in surprises in the physical, no one knows so well as the man of science. Who could have forecast the phenomena of the organic world before the entrance of life ? Who could have expected sense-consciousness out of physical phenomena (though this is the other side of the question), or (which is the right side) physical action out of sense—or of ideational-consciousness ? Who could have imagined the mystery of will, and of its power, quite other than the most exalted form of reflex action, of initiating bodily activities ? ‘ Every human soul is in some degree a new creation, an incalculable force . . . acting with vigour on its surroundings.’

This last example—except that the spiritual antecedent and the physical consequent are within the same personality—brings us right into the sphere of miracle. There is, indeed, the further difference, if difference it is, that the will does not generate the forces by which the physical operations are accomplished. But it may be that in no miracle is either force or matter generated. As a living organism does not create vital energy, but transforms mechanical energy into vital, so it may be that our Lord, by His supernatural power, not created but transformed and rearranged the matter and the energy of the part of the material Universe upon which He acted. Be this as it may ; in the creation of a person, of a being able to will, there was an accession of the Divine such as had not been known before upon the earth ; and in creating this person, able by his will to set up action in his bodily frame, God inaugurated miracle. Add to this, that not only is this person able to project will into his own organisation, but that, not miraculously, indeed, but by influence, through such channels as the eye and ear, by such instrumentalities as speech and writing, he is able to project his volition into the motor nerves and muscles of another or of ten thousand persons, and draw into its service limitless quantities and varieties of matter and energy ; and you have before you a form of being so wonderful and mysterious, that it may

well become the substratum of possibilities dreamable only because they have begun to appear.

This is the human *person*, marvellous through and through, and in part miraculous. Imagine, now, a Person greater than the human to appear! What powers would he have? We cannot forecast. Certainly we shall expect to find that there will be acts 'natural' to him more 'miraculous' than any that man can do. Nor shall we, if we are wise, expect these acts to involve any more suspension of the 'laws of Nature' than does the action of a magnet when it draws upward to itself a needle that before pressed downwards upon a table.

The old activities continue; but a new power enters and dominates the situation. The new power before our imagination belongs to the new personality: still more will the new power be emphasised if upon the person rests a Divine Mission, high and explicit; if, in other words, in both his personality and mission he represents a new and advanced accession of the Divine.

Before, then, we talk of anything as being incredible, we have to ask, not, simply, 'Is it consistent with a certain range of experience, or with the order of some grade of the Universe, or with the powers of some variety of beings?' but, 'Is it harmonious with the rest of that present whole of which it professes to be a part, and with the general drift of the purpose and working of God?' The answer that it seems to be so harmonious, might not prove it true, but it would make impossible the charge that it is *incredible*.

In the light of these considerations, how unreasonable is the attempt to estimate the credibility of the miraculous in Christianity by the standards of Physical Science, or by the probabilities of ordinary human experience. That a man who was born blind should, at the word or by the superficial manipulation of another, become able to see, is a thing so unlikely that, if it were asserted as an isolated fact, no man of science, and indeed no man of sense, would think it worth his while to make enquiry concerning it.

But if He who wrought the 'cure' were One who claimed to be the Son of God ; to be sent on a supreme Mission of divine love ; to be endowed with the Holy Ghost for the purposes of His Mission ; to be able to do by the power of that endowment whatever He would in the interests of His Mission ; who so carried Himself that He could utter the challenge, ' Which of you convinceth me of sin ? ' and who gave forth words of truth, of wisdom and of holiness which arrested the attention of all honest men who came within His range ;—then, to treat the alleged cure as an isolated event, and to dismiss it with the contempt with which isolated wonder-stories are set aside, would be an act of nothing less than perverse folly. To assert, ' Such claims as those of this man are incredible, and his wonder-story goes with him,' would be a very solemn rejection ; but it would not be intellectually absurd : to detach one feature from the whole picture, and judge it upon its supposed separate merits, would be absurd in the last degree.

Whether Christ performed miracles or not, we of to-day have no direct means of knowing. No competent person would maintain that the New Testament, as mere literary evidence, would suffice to establish the fact. The old refuge for the infirm of faith, ' the records prove the miracles, and the miracles prove Christ,' has fallen in, undermined by the question, ' Who will prove the records ? ' The crisis is wholesome for us : we shall learn to accept the miracles as proved by Christ instead of Christ as proved by the miracles. And, meantime, assured of Christ, we walk at liberty. It need mean no failure of faith in Christ if a man had his own opinion about this or that miraculous narrative in the New Testament. When Huxley expressed his disbelief in the Gadarene miracle, though his language was rough, and he himself, probably, had not much faith in Christ, he did not prove his unbelief by his contention. That a man shall feel his feet staggered every time a miraculous narrative, for a moment it may be, bewilders him, is bondage to the letter, of the gravest kind, or faith weak almost to imbecility. Of course, as Christian men, we

believe in the miraculous Christ, and in so doing we maintain that we have no 'incredibility' to surmount. If Christ was and is what His Church believes Him to be, it was natural to Him that, if He thought fit for the purpose of His Mission, He should wield powers over matter and over man which are not at the disposal of any lower order of being. This is the thing here contended for.

Who can tell how simple a thing a miracle may be to Him who has power to touch the springs of being! It may have occurred to the reader to wonder how little count is taken of what, upon reflection, seems the more astounding portion of the miracle wrought by Peter at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. Peter, in the Name of Christ, healed the lame man. That was a divine act: no less but no more. Forthwith, however, the man, 'leaping up, stood, and walked and entered with them into the Temple, walking and leaping and praising God.' Now, by all ordinary experience, it should have taken the man days or weeks to learn so to adjust his muscular movements as to be able to walk and leap. This any mother can testify. Yet the man leapt forthwith, and the narrator seems to take no separate account of the fact. The omission cast a shade over the miracle in the mind of him who writes. But, presently, he noticed or remembered the behaviour of a chick just out of the egg, which later he contrasted with the helplessness of a newly-hatched thrush. The young chick half struts, half tumbles about as if during the days of his incubation his mother had been teaching him. If such co-ordination of muscular movements is possible to a creature that has never before had an hour's training or practice, how near together may lie the potentiality of a God-made creature and the capacities of that creature when the results of his own endeavours have been super-added. The lame man had but to be chick instead of thrush—both God-made creatures—to be able to leap as he did; and the difference between the two capacities may have meant but a touch of a spring of the nature by the Finger of God.

Though miracles, like the works of nature, illustrate rather than prove Him who must be learned through the conscience, there is one miracle, if the word may now be used in a sense scarcely figurative though higher, whose reality is vital to the claims of Christianity. This miracle is that transformation in the characters and lives of men which the ordinary resources of human nature were not competent to effect. If this miracle were not a fact, Christ would be unproved. The doctrine of God would remain, and the personal character of Jesus would be ineffaceable from the records of History, but the former would become a beautiful imagination only, and the latter an inexplicable enigma.

‘Say you so?’ says a doubter; ‘then you also are committed to my belief that Christianity lacks credentials, for, as I hold, your miracle is not a fact. Christianity, I hold, is unproved.’ With this contention the fourth obstacle to the belief in or even the fair consideration of Christianity comes to the front.

Imagine some Sleeper of Ephesus, who passed into unconsciousness as the first notes of the Gospel proclamation fell upon his ears and quickened his heart with transcendent hope, now to awaken from his oblivion, and with clear vision to see the world as it is. It has been imagined by a modern writer that one of the Wise Men who went to Bethlehem survived to witness the scene on Calvary. Like him, somewhat, would our Sleeper be. The Wise Man, the tumult of hell failing to prevent it, discerned the God. Would our Sleeper do the same?

It happened yesterday to him who writes to fall into conversation on his road to church with a lady who works among the London poor, and who mentioned the case of a father and mother and five children who live in an underground kitchen for which they pay five shillings a week. Such facts are, of course, too familiar; but it also happened that in the service which followed a hymn was sung in which the following lines are contained:

Ere He raised the lofty mountains,
Formed the seas, or built the sky,
Love eternal, free and boundless
Moved the Lord of Life to die,
Fore-ordained the Prince of princes
For the throne of Calvary.

There for us and our redemption,
See Him all His Life-blood pour !

Our Sleeper is supposed to have heard the Gospel proclamation nearly two thousand years ago ; and to-day he learns about the problem of the housing of the poor in great cities ; about such facts as that set forth in the ' Song of the Shirt ' ; about the whole tragedy of abject and debasing poverty which is found wherever men are brought together in masses ; about the wickedness that haunts these cities, not alone among the poor. He sees capitalists and labourers arrayed against each other in an attitude of all but war. He hears the deep murmurs of discontent and threats of revolution that reverberate through all the lands of Christendom. He sees the rich suffocated, almost, by their wealth, forgetful of the suffering millions, or unable to get at them if they remember them. He sees politicians, whose business it is to co-operate together for the healing of the woes of the body politic, combining against each other in factions, each seeking to thwart what the other would accomplish. He sees international politics carried on by all the tricks and subterfuges of veiled war, and millions of Christian men armed against each other as for instant conflict. He sees the commercial classes hastening to be rich, and defining success in life in terms of money. He sees trade driving itself at all hazards into lands whose governments are unwilling to admit it, or among populations utterly unfitted to employ, except to their ruin, the commodities which it introduces. He hears education pleaded for as a means by which commercial rivalry may be made successful. He sees the

Christian family a wreck, the young lawless and profane, and the marriage tie growing ever weaker. He sees the Christian Church rent by schism, its sects alien or hostile to each other, and engaged in incessant controversy over things which should have made them one. He sees the great mass of religious people living as if 'respectability' were the great fact of existence, and church-going an incident thereof. He sees among the clergy those who have nothing to teach, partly because the people have no desire to learn, but, partly, being little qualified for their work if the desire exists, and without the heart to spend their unasked-for strength upon the hungry thousands who would give their lives for spiritual food and consolation. He sees among these same clergy those who are ready and longing to devote themselves to the needs around them, but who are handicapped by the want of the very means of living, because Christian people have forgotten the duty of giving for Church uses. He sees, meantime, tens of millions, in half contemptuous indifference or in bitter hatred, push past the Faith, refusing even to discuss its merits, and spending their churchless Sundays with the weekly newspaper. He sees society eaten through with the easy-going agnosticism of—not broken hearts—but men who find this the newest and cheapest creed, with the jaunty surrender of the hope of Immortality and, with it, of faith in the reality of the human standing, and of the freedom and responsibility in the possession of which man is man. Behind this, he sees rising the terrible spectre of the explicit denial of the guilt of sin and of any judgment upon it beyond the inconvenience which it may possibly entail. And in the hearts of all, rich, poor, respectable or abandoned, 'religious' or unbelieving, there rise the irrepressible questions, 'Is life worth living? Who will show us any good?' For the taste has gone out of things, and scarcely anyone, whether in luxury or in misery, more than endures.

Our Sleeper asks, 'Was then my great hope a dream?' and he turns to find someone who will answer his question.

His eye first falls upon one, truthful and earnest of aspect, who was brought up in the Christian Faith, but who has gradually fallen away from it. 'Was my hope a dream?' the Sleeper asks of him.

'By these tokens, I fear, yes,' he answers. 'Slowly and with reluctance I came to this conclusion; but it *is* my conclusion.'

Is the man right? Or is faith in Christianity rational and moral, notwithstanding the terrible picture that facts are able to spread out before him?

The Sleeper waits to hear.

There stands by one who still calls himself a Christian. 'May I interpose?' he says.

'Surely,' says the other. 'Truth-seekers are a fraternity.'

'Then,' says he, 'spite of the most grave reasons that have staggered you, I do not think that you are justified in your renunciation of Christianity.'

'Show me,' says the other.

'I will speak plainly,' says the Christian; 'as plainly as you may speak to me. You were once a Christian; yet, in talking of the failures of the general body of Christian men, you say, in fact or in effect, "they," not "we." Change the word, and your view of things may change. I gather from your tone and bearing that you have lived a life above that of the common herd—a life, it may be, higher pitched than that of him who addresses you. Yet you do not, I am sure, imagine that you ever fulfilled your Christian duty perfectly: you have cause, therefore, for contrition. Now, the wise eyes by which alone we can see, or keep on seeing, the Christ, as they are not possible to us through perfect godliness in the past, are possible only through contrition in the present. The first note of the Gospel proclamation was and is, "Repent ye"; and the publicans and harlots had wiser eyes than had the Pharisees, because they were contrite.'

'You thrust home,' says the other.

'I have had plenty of practice with the point of the

dagger turned the other way,' says the Christian. 'But my thrust is brotherly.'

'I do not doubt it,' says the other.

The Christian continues: 'I will be willing to rest my whole case upon the paradox that, while the profound need for contrition, at the present time, makes Christianity almost incredible, the fact that it is *contrition* that is called for, and not mere regret, is the fundamental proof of Christianity. May I then ask you a question arising also out of my own experience?'

'You may ask me what you will.'

'Tell me, then, were you while you still ranked yourself as a Christian in working contact with the Christian Church, or did you, simply, hold your belief as a belief? In particular, did you go to Holy Communion?'

'Leaving out for a moment the last member of your question, I would say that the difference between working contact and belief never much occurred to me; but now that you put the question, I think that it was simply as a belief that I held Christianity. Certainly, I did not go to Holy Communion, to use your own language about that Christian Rite.'

'Then,' answers the Christian, 'I think you are not competent to judge of the truth of Christianity. You are in a worse position than an honest pagan would be; for you have the disadvantages without the advantages of familiarity. Moreover, you are in the obscurity due to unfaithfulness to your then convictions. And, if Christianity is true, you were, in failing to go to Holy Communion, subjecting yourself to a positive loss. For not only does that holy service foster, as nothing else does, the spirit of contrition of which we have spoken, but it is a positive means of grace; which grace, with however little of deliberation, you threw away. You were reducing yourself to a state of spiritual starvation and, therefore, of spiritual feebleness, by neglecting the food that was offered you. To be sure, it was better to stop away than to go profanely, or to go flippantly; but you would not have done

either of these had you gone at all. Wickedly, it was not in you to do ; but more than unwise, by the standard of your then belief, you surely were.'

'I like to talk with you,' says the other ; 'you speak plainly.'

'Thank you ; and I will venture to go on. Your renunciation of the Christian Faith is the outcome of the miserable failure which most professedly Christian men are, and of the terrible condition of Christendom and the world which results from that failure. Far be it from me to attempt to tone down the dark colours of the picture which has bewildered you, and which seems to me as dreadful and almost as bewildering as it does to you. In a sense, it is more bewildering to me than to you, for you accept the conclusion to which it points, while I, though acknowledging to the full its gravity, do not accept the conclusion, and so have to reconcile it with that to which it seems to be almost diametrically opposed. If I made light of the desperate condition of things which has deprived you of your belief, I should not be worth your attention. But making light of it not at all, I say to you that I do not think your conclusion is justified even by the terrible argument which resides in the facts that have overwhelmed you. Christian men have failed : that is indisputable. That *Christianity* has failed, is a proposition of quite another order.'

'Yes, it is a different proposition : and you think that the difference is great enough to rebut the charge that Christianity has failed. Put the matter a little more fully ; I can listen to you, because you do not tell pious lies.'

'I will gladly try to show you what I mean, because you do not tell impious lies. Thus, then :—Two classes of men break the heart of him who cares. The first is that of those who stand outside the Church, and look at Christianity, or what they take to be Christianity, in the abstract ; the second is that of those who are inside the Church and play with its duties. These two classes make up the majority of the children of Christendom. And yet

men talk of Christianity as having failed. Christianity *cannot* have failed ; for, speaking in the large, it has never been tried. Christianity is not a *thing* to stand apart : it is a life to be lived—to be lived, primarily, by individuals : if men do not or will not live it, check-mate is reached. To those who *will* not live it, whatever excuses may exist for them, appeal is useless till they are converted to righteousness. To those who *do* not live it—those of the first class, that is—appeal may be made on the ground of their rationality. Christianity, one may say to them, if it is anything, is a doctrine and a life : you cannot judge of it or test it while you regard it as a doctrine, even if your regard is, so far, accurate. If you are a Theist, you believe in God because, in the profoundest sense, the doctrine of God *works—it makes men* : Christianity can be proved, tested, only by seeing if it, too, works.

‘ Many of the men who stand outside the life of the Church, and contemplate Christianity as a doctrine and a vision, simply, would make the best of Christians could they be brought in. How is their gracious capture to be accomplished, or their surrender to be induced ? The natural way would be that the lives of those already within should so impress them that they could not but join the happy company. This way, alas ! is not much available. The fact is deep shame to the Church ; but the good men outside should not take it too much to heart. A man’s standard of conduct is due to many things beside the Faith he holds, and the ethical conceptions of men who hold a lower Faith may be loftier than those of men holding a higher. So each enquirer after truth must stand upon his own feet, and endeavour to judge a doctrine upon its merits and by test of what *he* could make of it, not by the test of what another makes or fails to make of it. Truth, or what offers itself as truth, must be seen in its own light, tested by its proper fruit, and if rejected, rejected for its failure to give light and to prove its power to bear fruit. The lack of a faithful witness for Christ by those who are called by His Name is a grievous loss to the world ; but it does

not disprove Him : certainly it does not disprove Him if He can shine by His own light. It would indeed be an unspeakable strength to us if we could see the Christ, not only in Himself, but in the faces of all His followers ; we must not, however, because they fail to shine, say that He is dark.'

' There is force in your argument ; but your very success seems to raise a still graver question. You will not be hurt by it ; and I do not ask it as assuming that it cannot be answered : I aim rather to elicit your answer. The question is this : If Christianity cannot be said to have failed because men have practically refused to be Christians, does not this mean that Christ has failed because, spite of Him, the refusal has been made ? '

' I understand your spirit ; and the question is a fair one, none the less for its solemnity : the answer, however, goes deep. There is, first, the thought of the slow-seeming purpose, the long patience, of God. With Him, what is failure to-day may be success to-morrow : no one but He can see to the end of things. There is, next, the fact that the being whom Christ came to save was man—a sort of God in himself. It is never to be assumed that even God can, in the last extremity, save a man against his will. The Incarnation is the coming out of God to the help of man ; but it leaves man intact ; and he, to be helped, must respond, in will, to the Helper. Moreover, in spheres beyond the circle of his own personal being, man can fight against God. In the mystery of his power to will, he can not only do evil, he can inflict evil ; he can disseminate evil to the third and fourth generation, and through spheres incalculable his evil influence may tell. We must be ever reminding ourselves that it is an essential part of the Christian Faith that, with matter perhaps and with evil certainly, God has had to be in incessant and bitter conflict. Calvary is the monument of this truth. Had the sanctification of the world been an easy task, Christianity had not been. And, finally, there is this profound distinction. When God began His work of love in creation, though

there was self-sacrifice before Him, there was no schism. He was, and remains, one with Himself: God *is* love. When the Incarnation took place, and the Eternal Son came into humanity, though His work had to be done amidst the contradiction of sinners, though His life was a perpetual warfare, there was peace within. There was no divided will: like God, He was at one with Himself. But now, in the Dispensation of the Spirit, the work is within the individual man: there is war in the *members*: the Holy Ghost has to deal with men, each of whom is divided against himself. Each man loves good, but also he loves evil, or for a long time the love of evil maintains the struggle against the love of good. Each human soul is the battle-field of contending forces, and the Holy Ghost has to mix in the *melée* if He will do His work; and oftentimes in that *melée* He has scarcely an ally. Yet allies He must find, if His work is to be done; for the salvation of man is not coercion but conversion; and regeneration is not the substitution of something new for that which was, but the re-vitalising and transfiguration of that nature which God made at the beginning. With such considerations before us, we may wonder less that the history of the world and of Christendom has been what it has been; that the condition of both of them is what it is. Each saved man is a brand plucked from the burning. And, seeing matters thus, the good man girds up his loins and addresses or re-addresses himself to the conflict. He realises that to become a Christian is not to enter Paradise, but to take the right side in Pandemonium. His faith is a profoundly moral act: he believes that he may *do*. Full of consternation, oftentimes, he says "Here, and here alone, is hope: I have chosen my side."

BOOK IV

THE GROUNDS UPON WHICH THE CHRISTIAN
FAITH MAY BE RECEIVED

1. *The root doctrine* of Christianity :

God is Self-sacrificing Love.

True in the sphere of Redemption,

True in the sphere of Creation ?

Assuming this latter also—

Vision of the whole range of Divine activity.

‘ Love involving pain.’

2. The doctrine of the Trinity : ‘ Self-sacrificing Love.’

The revelation of the Divine in action.

Credible because we have the witness to it in ourselves.

3. The third great doctrine.

Character in man, the aim.

Means thereto.

Credible ?

The denial incredible.

4. The doctrine of the Incarnation.

By what means, on what grounds, may this be believed ?

God causes our moral consciousness.

Christ operates a higher moral consciousness.

Moral portraiture found only in Christendom.

Confession of failure.

Yet assertion that faith in Christ stands on the same footing
as faith in God.

Further : Faith in Christ *is* faith in God.

5. Imagined—A concrete case under circumstances not complicated by the disadvantages of to-day.

6. What moral effect might be expected to follow ?

7. And what forecast ?

8. The Gospel proclamation a *regenerative* thing.

A new Ethic and a new Hope.

BOOK IV

THE GROUNDS UPON WHICH THE CHRISTIAN FAITH MAY BE RECEIVED

§ I

THE course of these meditations thus far has been as follows :

In Book I, the nature of faith was considered.

Book II was devoted to the setting forth of the objectives of faith, with, except in the case of Christianity, the grounds upon which they are believed.

Book III turned aside to weigh some difficulties that are felt by many to stand on the very threshold of the enquiry into the truth of the Christian religion.

It now lies before us to take up the broken thread of Book II, and to ask, What are the grounds upon which the Christian Faith may be received, and the means by which these grounds operate in a man a nearness to God which before was impossible ?

The root doctrine of Christianity is that God is self-sacrificing Love. That this language is not too strong as far as the redemptive sphere is concerned is proved by the words ' God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life ' ; and, ' He that spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things ? ' Whether it is equally appropriate to the Creative sphere, or whether ' Love ' simply would not be the right language for that sphere, may be more open to question. But it may be

that the more one realises the tremendousness of the Universe, the more will the consolation of the stronger language be felt to be necessary. Assuming this stronger language to be in place concerning the whole range of Divine activity, then some such vision as the following may rise before us.

Before time was (whatever that may mean), God dwelt 'in glory and blessedness unspeakable': the Divine was complete in Itself. But God—so runs the dream—set Himself to multiply His own blessedness, and create a Universe of joy. This, however, as it is thought, may have involved difficulties both within and without the Divine. It may have been, and is, indeed, indicated by the geological history of things from the first appearance of sentient beings upon the earth, that such a Universe could only be brought to completion through pain; and that the inevitable self-limitation of the Divine, in the act and process of creation, involved pain to the Divine. So creation commences with pain in itself and pain in God. The creature is co-sufferer with God and God with it, both pains being accepted by God for the sake of the blessedness that should follow.

'Not in blessedness supernal, sitting easy on a Throne,
Dealing sorrow unto others, with no sorrow of His own.'

Such was, perhaps, the first root of the Divine Idea of the Incarnation; which was not redemptive, but a great step in the bringing of creation to its consummation. Sin, however, entered: the Incarnation took on its tragic aspect: new pain arose; and an intenser conflict was imposed upon God and the creature. Here, as before, the creature was a co-sufferer with God; and man, whom sin primarily concerned, was called to be a co-worker with Him in driving out the sin; in making it again possible to bring creation to its perfection; and in putting an end to pain. So the gloom passes from the Universe, and the agony is but the agony of a glorious battlefield. All the pain borne by and permitted by God is the outcome of Divine Love: there is no final tragedy, save for those who will not

consent to be co-sufferers and co-workers with the Divine. And concerning the pain, it must be observed that all pain held by God or man for purposes of Creation or Redemption is held voluntarily : Him, no one can coerce : no one worthy the name of, or fit to be a saviour would desire to refuse it.

§ 2

Commingle with the transcendent vision of the Love of God is the doctrine that might seem to stand outside the moral ; the doctrine, that is, of the Trinity. But when this doctrine is realised as exhibiting Love within, that is, between the Persons of, the Divine, and as connected with the Self-sacrificing Love of each Person of the Blessed Trinity on behalf of man, it becomes radiant with the moral. For Love is Morality ; and Self-sacrificing Love in the Divine is morality in ecstasy. Thought of thus, the doctrine loses all the seeming of a speculation, and becomes the revelation of the Divine in action—of infinite Love at work. In the depth of the unseen, the Father gives His Son for our salvation ; the Son of the Father gives Himself to effectuate the Love of the Father ; the Holy Ghost consents to carry the Love of the Father and of the Son into the heart of man, and to that end to immerse Himself in our corruption, and bring us out, by His Indwelling, into the sweet purity of Christ.

Is all this credible ? Of the doctrine of the Trinity apart from the doctrine of Divine Love with which it is corporate, no one could have even an opinion *pro* or *con* : with that doctrine, it becomes a truth shining by its own light ; and the doctrine of the Divine Persons grows in the heart into deeper tune with that other which we can more understand, while itself is no more inscrutable than is everything when we get below the surface.

To return once more to the question : Is the doctrine of the Self-sacrificing Love of God credible ? The history of things up to the point which this meditation has reached would seem to be one long and incurable misery and

baseness. When sometimes we wake up to the sense of the travail of creation ; when we learn some new example of human wickedness and cruelty, and are brought again face to face with the miseries and degradation of mankind, we are tempted to feel that it is not credible, and that such wails as ' God-deserted world ' and ' Orphaned race ' have a right to create the fear that they are justified. Nor is it rationally credible to us, if we forget the beneficent uses that pain may have, the unavoidable strain that pain may have in the working out of the purposes of God, the tremendous significance of human freedom, and the dire nature of sin ; and if we lose sight of the momentariness of our span of earthly life compared with the eternal issues that grow out of it. But if we remember these things, and face the considerations that would forbid faith, in the light of them, then the doctrine is still seen to be credible.

But why is it credible ? The answer is : Because we have the witness to it in ourselves. We are conscious that self-sacrificing love is the ideal of our own characters. We are convinced that every noble deed that has been done in the history of man has been done out of this root. We know that if this spirit could entirely die out of us, individually or corporately, we should be base indeed. We feel that it is as essential to our own ideal constitution in one region as is personality in another. It is, indeed, but a step beyond Theism, however glorious a step it is, and faith in it blends with our Theism. For Theism is at root but a true apprehension of our own proper nature, from which—without logic—or with the truest logic—we argue God by the light even of Natural Religion. Conscious that we are persons, rational, with discernment of moral obligation, able to will, we argue that in the Universe of which we are items there is One who represents its Unity, who is not less than we are in these respects. And when we go on to realise that we, persons thus endowed, are by our proper nature able to love, putting others before ourselves, we are sure that the One is this also. Whether in all spheres of His activity Self-sacrifice may be called

for from God, we cannot be sure ; but we are sure that if called for it would be forthcoming, even as, though infinitely more than, it would be forthcoming in our ideal selves. The objectivity of Right is the link that joins earth to heaven, that affiliates man to God or, speaking in the order of discovery, God to man. The argument is not so much that men *ought* to think thus, but that they do think thus. A man's consciousness of himself, unless he is base, and apart from mere speculative opinions, affirms that he is rational and moral, and that he moves in a Universe in which rationality and morality rule. And the final proof to reason and faith, which in this region being compact with conscience are the same thing, is that, though spite of the disbelief or unfaithfulness of individuals the world can go on, it is unimaginable that the doctrine of chaos, universally held, could procure anything but unmitigated pandemonium. We move secure in the deep darkness of life because we are sure that there is Light, that is Love, beyond.

§ 3

The next great doctrine of Christianity, which indeed is but the first doctrine applied, is that God in His love for man regards character as the chief good to be worked out in him. Love is the active desire for the well-being of others, and the true conception of their well-being will be in accordance with the nature of each particular being. In a being that has no faculties higher than those of sentient pleasure, the purpose of God will be to give it pleasure and to save it from pain. 'His tender mercies are over all His works.' But to confine the thoughts to sentient pleasure when the being dealt with has higher faculties, would be the act of a foolish person even among men. A wise parent would teach his child, 'You must forego the lower advantages and even accept pain in their place if thereby, and thereby only, you can become a nobler person.' And that parent would not hesitate to give pain to other members of his family (being assured of their willingness

to bear it), if without that pain and that willingness the higher good could not be wrought in the member of their brotherhood in question. In other words, love will make character its supreme aim in all beings to which character is possible, and will withhold pleasure and inflict pain if only by that means the better thing than pleasure can be secured. When God addresses Himself to the work of bringing into being creatures who might be sharers in His own blessedness, the highest blessedness that He had to communicate to them was His righteousness, His holiness, His lovingness, His Character, that is. The communication of this blessedness to all creatures capable of receiving it was the end at which Divine Love must aim. So Love may be seen chiefly in the giving and the using of pain. The struggles of poverty, the long agonies of a mortal disease, and the less severe forms of natural sequence by wrestling with which men are made ; the temptations that make life a fierce conflict if they are not yielded to ; the sacrifice of all that the flesh holds dear for conscience sake ; the fires of martyrdom ; the pains of purgatory, if such there be, are all given or allowed by God, not because they are that which He desires to give, but because they can be made the means to that His desire. Love is the one motive, character the one blessedness, to be worked out.

Is this doctrine credible ? To the eye of sense, and indeed to the eye of reason when it does not rise to faith, it is incredible. To these, we seem to be immersed in an ocean, to be tossed by a tempest, of purposeless pain. But to the man of faith who is convinced of God, who is convinced that man is man, who remembers that sin is anti-God, and that the pain due to it is not of God except as a means to an end and by His translation of it into that means, and who knows that life for each individual and for the race at large is a great training-ground (in which every man fights his own battle, but in which no man fights alone, the wounds of each being the wounds of all, but also, it may be, the salvation of all), the denial of the doctrine would be incredible. The pain is a fact beyond dispute,

which has not to be questioned but interpreted, and to the man of faith this doctrine is its only interpretation. He asks himself 'Would *I* give such pain wantonly? Do *I* value character above all things, and would I, were my powers greater, and could I rise to my best self, pursue evil with implacable hostility at the cost of any pain till it was extinguished? Would I, tender and helpful with sinners, bearing their burdens and helping them step by step till they had recovered their feet, yet scourge them with all necessary suffering that the blessedness of character might at last be worked out in them? We know the answer, and we know that in that answer the man will read the heart of God and be quite sure of the doctrine before us.

§ 4

But once again, not in blessedness supernal dealing sorrow unto others. And so the acceptance by *God* of pain for others in the interests of character brings us into the heart of the next great doctrine of Christianity, the doctrine of the Incarnation, that is. For though if the Incarnation is a fact it may well have motives and purposes that pass beyond our power to imagine, yet it cannot be doubted that its central motive was by bringing Divinity into Humanity to make it possible to impart divine character to men. And this aim is pursued by the infliction of pain upon God by Himself. The Eternal Son of God did by His birth as man, by His life, work and death bring to the climax of its manifestation the Self-sacrificing Love of God; did, by becoming one with man as he then was, put Himself into the position in which He could 'put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself,' and did, by becoming the Seed-corn of a new Humanity, save sinners in their interior condition, make possible the restoration of all that had been actually or potentially present in man as he was first made, and lead him up to heights of character heretofore undreamed of. This is the last of the primary doctrines of Christianity: all else is detail or sequel. He who

believes these four doctrines will certainly be willing to call himself a Christian, and, assuming that he is in earnest, will proceed accordingly. By what means, on what grounds, may one who does not already believe, accept the last—which will swallow up all the rest—of the propositions here set down? The question is not—How may an untutored savage, or a pagan with a more formal creed, or a child of Christendom who has morally failed, touch the hem of Christ's garment? it is—How may a man of intelligence and moral tone, such for instance as the doubter who was depicted in the previous Book, recover his full hold upon the Christ whom he has lost?

All faith is the same in kind, and its grounds are always the same: the difference is in its degree or stages. Let Theism once more give the key note.

Our faith in God is belief in Him who accounts for, because He causes, our moral consciousness: we are convinced that He is, because we at our highest and best are what we are; and our conviction becomes a working certainty, and adherence to it a fidelity, because through that adherence we become our best, and life is made coherent. Whoever believes in God for *himself* believes thus and on these grounds.

Now, it is claimed on behalf of Christ that He is the creator of a new and higher moral consciousness in man. The claim is not, simply, that He has announced a higher moral code, though that would be and was and is a great thing; but that He has operated a loftier instinct and impulse of righteousness in the spirits of those who have thus far come under and yielded to His influence. How He has accomplished this, is an after question: that He has done it, if done it He has, is the matter before us. If He has done it, then faith in Him stands on the same footing as faith in God, for then we believe in Him as we believe in God because He accounts for, and causes us to be, what we are. Any other 'proofs' of Him have a far off and artificial sound, as have such proofs in relation to our fundamental faith in God. Belief in Him and our moral

consciousness are *identical*: in living our full selves, we experience God and Him, and in living Him, we rise to true life and see the vision of a coherent world.

This is the account that a convinced Christian would give of himself in relation to Christ. But one who was an enquirer into Christianity, rather than as yet a believer in it, would desire some more explicit and detailed account of this alleged Christian consciousness. What such an one desires must for the most part be gradually acquired, realised bit by bit, and taken home to the convictions by meditation. Some leading features of the picture may, however, be attempted.

The most central characteristic of the Christ mind is the transference of the ruling interest from self to others, and this not on some supreme occasion, when it may take place in any noble-minded man, but as the habit of the thoughts. Add to this that the interest is catholic, embracing all men. Add to *this* that it is set pre-eminently upon character and, therefore, upon the fulfilment of Divine order. Finally, add that it is invincible in its reverent hopefulness, admitting despair of no man. It is scarcely to be doubted that in these elements we have a moral portraiture, complete and unique, one found only in Christendom. It is supernatural, and goes beyond the normal demands upon man, who was required to love his neighbour only *as himself*. It needs an account to be given of it over and above that demanded by the original moral constitution of man. Now, the original constitution gives us, by inference, our doctrine of God, by which alone what we are as men is accounted for. From the Christ-consciousness, we have to infer someone else, or God under a new manifestation and accomplishing a new operation. There is this difference, however. God could be but *inferred*: 'no man hath seen God at any time.' But the cause of our Christ-consciousness has been seen; and though we see Him no more at present, the portrait of Him in human lineaments, which we can understand, lives in the thoughts and hearts of men. The Theist says, 'God must be, for

I, ideally, am what I am, and He only can account for me. The Christian says, 'The Christ must be, for I, ideally, am what I am, and He only can account for me': but he adds 'not only, He must be, but He was and is. He is the visible *That* which accounts for me.'

If now someone should say to the Christian, 'But there is not anything to account for: you are but as other men'—the answer would be that though, as is abundantly confessed in these pages, the portrait of Christ rendered in the characters of His followers is pathetically faint and blurred, as indeed is the portrait of God seen in the characters of all men, it is not true that in Christendom, and still less in Christ's most faithful ones, Christ's lineaments do entirely fail to appear. Even in those who have ceased to confess Him, if they are men of moral worth, His distinctive characteristics show. The best of the ancients, in their contempt for or their despair of the masses of men, are of quite another order from the kindly and philanthropic Agnostics of to-day. Christ rules, in measure, in the hearts of all the children of Christendom, except those who make evil their good. And the ways of the world, imperfect as they are, tell of Him. There are features of social organisation found nowhere but within the range of the voice of Christ. We minify our debt to Him by detaching from Him the light which we received from Him, and in possessing which we fancy that we did not need Him. Even from Christendom as it is, let the every day light which we have received from Christ be struck out, and into what a horror of darkness should we relapse!

Returning then from this sorrowful confession of how little Christian men exhibit the Christ within them, and affirming once more the Christ in Himself, notwithstanding our failure, we recur to the assertion that our faith in Christ stands on the same footing as our faith in God. But now we say more, and maintain that, by proof of what has been set down, our faith in Christ *is* faith in God—faith in God made Man. Thus:

If the character of Christ—preserved in the hearts of all

who know Him and who love the good, whether they fully believe in Him or not—

If that character is a human version of our highest conception of God, a conception formed in us, indeed, by Christianity, but endorsed by us as the only conception henceforth possible :

If Christ is able not simply to set a noble example and to teach an elevated Ethic but, by interior working, to reproduce in others His own character :

Then, we have the Incarnation. We have not, indeed, an explanation of the mystery, which can no more be understood than can the Trinity Itself, but we have the heart and mind of God translated into a human version ; and a work which God alone can do, done in One who was and is Man and in men. And as, when a man has been taught the being of God through his own moral consciousness, he can think of God as doing all other work proper to the Divine ; so, having been taught by his Christian consciousness the Divinity of Christ, he can think of Christ fulfilling all the Divine-Human work called for by the purpose of God and the needs of man, and, pre-eminent among that work, the work of the Atonement.

This is the road by which we moderns must arrive at faith in Christ. The road is, indeed, well-nigh choked up by the briars of human unfaithfulness, but he who will take the trouble to search for it will find that it exists. And it is the only practical road open to those who dare to think, but have not yet learned to believe.

All other roads are baulked by questions of Inspiration, Bible authority and Church authority, which from the out-Church point of view are interminable. On *this* road, a man has but to deal with existing facts ; with the acknowledged character of Christ, the correspondence of that character with the only possible conception of God, the work of Christ in man. If, upon the basis of the apprehension of these things, a man will give himself to consider what must needs come of it if all Christ's people would suffer the Christ life to have its way with them, he

will have no choice but to call himself a Christian. We *know* that there are possibilities present in the world which, effectuated, would end the bitterness of our woes. Death would, indeed, remain for the present ; but a nation, for instance, that loved as it knows it ought to love, and dared as it knows it ought to dare, could bring to an end that condition of things in its great cities which points to Atheism. As has been said, *how* Christ does His work in man is a question that still lies before us to be asked ; but that His work, rejected or submitted to, is a fact, there can be no doubt.

It may be worth while to remark that the road to faith which is the only indisputable road now open to us, did, probably, not exist in the first days, because Christ had not in those first days begun His work *in* men. He did not, and probably under the conditions of His Incarnation could not, work until after His resurrection and ascension. Corresponding to this, men's faith in Him could not be what ours can be. It was indeed easier for the pure in heart to believe in Him then than it is in our troubled days, for they had immediate contact with Him and His words and works, but the belief was inchoate or unformed. His work was at that time a work of preparation ; He Himself preached ' The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Men had to believe in Him as the One who was thus preparing. They called Him ' a great prophet,' ' the Messiah ' ; and even when they called Him ' the Son of God ' it is not likely that they understood the full meaning of their words. They could not understand Him fully, because He was not fully manifested ; but after His resurrection and ascension He began that work which God alone can do, and thereby proved Himself Divine. He now stands before us in His fulness, but we can only adequately and soundly believe in Him in that fulness if we will seek the proof of Him in that distinctive work by which He is proclaimed Divine. We, however, so often fall short of this. Having lost the advantage of immediate contact with His human Personality, we yet resort to the old proofs which,

in their perfection and undiluted by intermediate testimony and teaching, did but demonstrate a lower thing concerning Him than we have learned. We persist in knowing Christ after the flesh, or do not rise on wings to know Him after the Spirit. It is true that the manifestation of Him in the Spirit is dependent upon us who have so miserably failed to let Him shine through us ; but, surely, the search for Him in ourselves and others would tend to provoke us to clear away the mists of sin and selfishness which hide Him. It seems paradoxical to say, in the same breath, that we have failed to prove Christianity, and yet that Christianity is largely shut up to us for proof. The paradox, however, is a reality, and those who are seeking for truth, and those who profess to be maintaining it will do well to attend to the double fact. There are a vision and a power amongst us that are not of us : that vision and power are the Christ.

§ 5

We have thus far considered faith in Christ and the grounds of it in the abstract ; or, if not quite in the abstract, as existing under the conditions with which the comparative culture of Christendom has surrounded us. It may be well to imagine some concrete case under circumstances which were not complicated by the disadvantages from which we suffer, and to try to realise how in such a case faith might grow.

Let us suppose some later Socrates, some earlier Marcus Aurelius, some Proselyte of the Gate, or some other devout seeker after God to whom Christianity, its initial doctrines and facts, were for the first time propounded, and before whom they were set, not argumentatively, but as shining by their own light in the heart of him who unfolded them, with the hope that they would in the same way commend themselves to him who heard them. How might they be expected to affect him ? What would his reason say to them ? Would his heart incline toward them ? Would

he find them harmonious with the best within him ? Would he think of their moral quality as arguing their truth ? Would he feel that if he could accept them they would quicken and elevate his moral life ? Would he anticipate that those who believed them would be found to be the better men for their faith ? If, even, he should be prepared to surrender to them at once, might his act be counted a rational one, and not mere folly ?

‘ Love within the Divine,’ he might say ; ‘ Love as the source of creation ; Self-sacrificing Love, as moving the Divine Three to persist in creation, and even take up the work of redemption ; the doctrine of the Fall, which reconciles the idea “ Man ” with fact of the actual condition of man ; all this forms a hypothesis so superb, so moving, so penetrative ; it so lights up the Universe, otherwise dark almost to despair, with righteousness and hope ; that I believe it and commit myself to it.’ Does the Faith, thus far, even stated merely, so shine by its own light, that wise eyes might receive it ?

‘ But,’ the devout Seeker may be supposed to continue, ‘ even this is a beginning and not the whole. You speak of the Incarnation, and the Indwelling of the Holy Ghost, as fruits of the Divine Love, and of these fruits as worked, not in the unseen and the Divine, but in Humanity. Such fruits bring your Christianity within the sphere of History, as the fruits of the Fall make that doctrine not a theory but the root of an historical record, as my past observation of life and experience of myself enable me now to perceive. To learn about and to understand this Incarnation and this Indwelling, if they be indeed realities, will be to see Divine Love at work in History ; as creation, interpreted by your Faith, which, so far, is now my Faith, has already exhibited in its measure the working of that Love in nature. Moreover, these activities of the Divine Love will cast back light upon the Love itself ; and knowing these I shall the better understand what already I believe : and, indeed, as I have said, I see that what I believe is but a beginning. Tell me, therefore, first, of the Incarnation.’

Thereupon, he who has already propounded the doctrines of God and His Love, proceeds to set forth the Gospel story—a chapter of human history none the less that it is a record of the *mystery* of the Divine in Its contact with man.

That which the devout Seeker has already received had to be true to justify his reception of it: this has to be *historically* true; yet no wise teacher would trouble the Seeker with discourses about the authority of the Scriptures, verbal inspiration, infallible accuracy in every detail, or any such matters: he would tell him the Church's story of her Lord's life on earth, couched necessarily in Scripture language; preaching, however, as yet at all events, not Scripture or the Church, but the story of the Christ.

For as the Self-demonstrating vision of God, obtained by whatever means, through whatever medium, is the only thing that can generate vital Theism, so the Self-demonstrating vision of the Christ is the only thing that can generate adequate Christianity. We do not want to know things about Him, simply, as any man would record them; still less are we content to base ourselves upon the record of these things made by various witnesses brought now-a-days into the region of doubt by literary criticism. We want to read the New Testament, to hear the Church's witness, as means by which the Christ may convince us of Himself, as means of so knowing Him that no question of detail or of the sufficiency of literary documents could affect our faith. As we believe in God and keep the vision of Him intact in our spirits, spite of a hundred difficulties, so we need to see the vision of the Christ, though through, yet unlimited by, all that we have heard about Him, and spite of any difficulties which what we have heard may involve. The enquirer under supposition would be prepared for such a vision. 'The Christ,' he would say, 'is the outcome of the Trinity; of the Love within the Divine; of the Self-sacrificing Love of the Divine for the creation and, especially, for man; of the need of man through the entrance of sin; of the mind of God towards sin, and of

the heart of God towards sinners, and of that movement of God which you call the Incarnation. The Christ life which you have set before me proves itself to flow from this source. You have told how God has come among men and lived a human life—the thing is a matter of history. But the demonstration of its truth is that, while exhibiting the marks of general historic truth, it proves its *source*.’

When, now, the Life told to this enquirer is found to contain such events as the miraculous conception; the years of miracle; the atoning death; the resurrection; the ascension; will these stagger him? ‘Surely not,’ he would say if he were asked; ‘could I expect an ordinary life from such a source? It is true indeed that such wonder-stories, taken separately and out of connection with the source of the life, would make no impression upon me; but taken with each other and with the source of the life of which they are a part record, they seem most natural. Given the Incarnation, it is an *ordinary* birth that would be the surprise: given the Incarnation and the miraculous birth, what more natural than a miraculous life? that a Divine Healer from sin should do miracles of healing of the *fruits* of sin is but the expression of the Divine Love and Power that sent the Healer: if the Divine made Man consented to die, who can think but that His death should have mystic power; and if He died, who can expect that He should remain dead! Finally; that He who came down from heaven should, His work being done, return to heaven, seems to me quite harmonious, however little I may understand the mode of the descent or the ascension. Your miraculous narrative, details apart, presents no difficulty to me. I believe it, however, not on its own merits, but on account of its accord with the vision of that Divine character which shines through your narrative, and which I feel to be the embodiment in flesh of that vision of the unseen Love which first wrought faith in me. I now believe in the Christ; but in doing so I believe over again what I believed before, the hypothesis having become

established fact. Believing in God, and all those moral glories which the Name covers, I believe also in Christ.'

§ 6

Christianity, as thus far exhibited, professes to be a revelation of God, of His nature, of His love for man, and of the fruit of that love in the Incarnation and its sequel. Before advancing, it is desirable to ask what moral effect might be expected to follow from this revelation of God and His work *for* man, upon one who had received it, but who had learned no more. Christianity teaches that man is renewed, himself responding, by the indwelling and in-working grace of God. But man, as man, is open to moral impressions, and can be affected, for good or for ill, by appeals to his reason, his imagination, his conscience and his heart. Let a man's knowledge of the Christian Faith end with the story of the Ascension : let him never have heard of Pentecost and of all that has followed from it : let him know only the doctrine of the love of God, and of its outcome in the Divine work for man down to the Ascension ; how would this much affect him ? Doubtless, if he were a reflective man, he would feel that there must needs be something more to follow ; but at present he knows of no more ; and it seems a not unprofitable question to enquire how thus much, known, would affect him. Grace has not yet been given to him ; but an appeal to his moral sense has been made. How will it work ?

It may be remarked that the word ' grace ' often has the meaning ' favour ' : this is not the meaning in view here. Such Divine help may, however, be looked upon as, by the goodness of God, man's normal birthright ; missed only by him who will not have it. The question raised in the previous paragraph is how the Christian revelation, down to the Ascension, would affect an honest man, normally endowed, but not as yet the subject of that profounder operation of the Holy Ghost consequent upon His indwelling in the Christian man, and which we call grace.

It may be said that the Christian revelation, cut short at the Ascension, would simply bewilder the man. It has, in effect, been confessed that it would bewilder him ; but surely also it would profoundly move him, and stir him to a passion of longing and endeavour after an intenser moral life than he had yet dreamed of. Could it be possible for a man who had learned as much as has been supposed to go through the rest of his life learning no more, it cannot be doubted that, unless he failed, he would pass his remaining days vision-haunted and hungry for that Life of Love which the revelation of God had brought within his view. In other words, not only is the proclamation of the Gospel of God a preparation for the dispensation of grace : it is itself a regenerative thing, waking up the moral being, moving to aspiration and contrition, and so, in the ordinary course of things—for the Christian proclamation does not end with the Ascension—creating a thirst for that living water to be poured into the soul which fertilises the *parched* land alone.

§ 7

It seemed useful to endeavour to imagine how a seeker after God in the first days of the Faith—an earnest-hearted Roman—would be affected his life through by the vision of the Love of God and the story of the Christ, if these alone had become known to him. It is now to be imagined that, instead of passing on to the end of life without further knowledge, he does, after a time, come to learn of the Gospel proclamation ‘ Repent ye : the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ How will this affect him ? Will he begin to enquire as to its authenticity : whether, though connected with the name of the Christ, it is really of God ; or will he, in the light of what already he has learned, at once recognise its origin and bow to its authority ? He has already learned to see sin in the light of God : will he not say, ‘ Repent is just what men have to do ; yet who would or could have issued the summons but God ? ’ He has learned that

Christ, the embodied Love of God, upon whom he has set his heart, is ascended *into heaven*. 'Surely,' he will say, 'that kingdom of which the world stands in such bitter need, not only is what one might have expected from the Love of God, but will naturally come from heaven, where Christ is.' And, further, he might well argue that repentance, which on its merits is so due from man, must needs take place as a preparation for the coming of a kingdom from heaven. The whole thing is in sequence with what he has already accepted : no new investigation is necessary, nor in *him* any new preparation of heart, except the preparation of keeping on repenting. As hitherto, in his heart's glow and soul's panting, the vision of the love of God and the history of Christ have lived, so now his watchword for practical life, his flag of holy battle, the sign in the heavens towards which his eyes will always be turned, will be the proclamation that has come to his knowledge.

If, now, some prophetic forecast had fallen upon the man, and he had seen the Christian centuries as they have been, would his faith in the divinity of the proclamation falter ? Would he, as did the Sleeper of Ephesus, ask, 'Is it then but a dream ?' He sees age after age laden with guilt, and for the most part unrepentant : he sees promise after promise of the kingdom of heaven die down into darkness and confusion and corruption : he sees, at last, a world as bewildered, if not as wicked, as that Roman world in which he lives. Will his faith fail ? Should it fail ? Is it rational that it should fail ? It is not rational that it should fail ; unless, with his faith in the proclamation, he surrenders also his faith in the reality of the Christ life, and in the Self-sacrificing Love of God. The things hang together. If God is, the call to repentance is eternal until repentance is accomplished : if God is, and man is man, and Christ lived, the kingdom of heaven *must* come, though even now we do not know what its form will be. And if his forecast was full enough, he would know that in every age there would be witnesses that the kingdom was on the road.

§ 8

The Seeker after God, present to our imagination, has taken into his heart the doctrine of the Love of God, the record of the outcoming of that Love in the Incarnation, and the promise of a new hope for man in the proclamation of the kingdom of heaven. A more intimate acquaintance with the teaching of Christ brings to his knowledge that a new Ethic as well as a new Hope has been set forth, and that Christ demands from, as well as promises to, man a new order of life.

It is pretty safe to assert that our Lord's summing up of the Mosaic morality cannot be held fully to represent the Christian code. If there ever was a time when the human organisation had been evolved without the entire human being having been created by God, then the law of conduct for that *quasi*-man, a law written in his instincts, was, simply, 'Live.' It may be that the struggle for existence was not a struggle of all other organic species only, but of the *animal man* itself. When, however, upon the basis of this organic being, the full fabric of MAN was raised, a new law entered. This new law, in its simplest terms, is 'Live and let live,' but more adequately expressed it is, 'Loving thyself, love God who loves thee and others, and love others as thyself.' This is the Mosaic law: it is the law of paradise: it is the law proper to man as man. Obeyed, it would have made a perfect world on the Eden level: it would make a comparatively perfect social condition even now. But it was not obeyed. Sin entered: man broke away from God, fell from any proper love of himself, and ceased to love his neighbour. He did not, indeed, return to the mere animal condition, and to the law of that nature which he had before he was fully man. That, he could not; for the consciousness of his completed constitution remained with him, and he lived to himself in, more or less, the sense of sin. Man was in ruins; was in discord with the law of his being. A new work was called for from God by the needs of man. He had made

him the highest of the animals : He had made him full man : He now had to restore him. Bethlehem and Calvary witness that He did not refuse the Self-sacrifice involved in this new work. The new work was *for* man, as the old ones had been ; but the old ones called for man to co-operate with God. The animal man unconsciously responded : the struggle for existence was beneficial to the race. The full man should, consciously and of will, have responded : this for the most part he has not done. In His new work for man, God calls for the response and co-operation of men. This is the Christian Ethic : ' Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Who being in the form of God counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.' This is the Christian Ethic, the law of absolute self-sacrifice : not ' Live ' ; not ' Live and let live ' ; but ' Live, or surrender life, for others.' And as the man who responds to this divine demand will have recovered the sense of his own true self ; so, that in others, for which he will live, will be their whole self, indeed, but supremely, their highest self.

Our Seeker after God : what will he say to this Ethic ? Will he find the tremendousness of its claims a stumbling-block ? or will he find the coherence of these claims with all that has gone before a demonstration of the divinity of that and of this ? The answer cannot be doubtful. The Self-sacrificing Love of God, the Love of God in Christ, the Love of God in the promise of the kingdom of heaven, make it but a matter of spiritual sequence that man shall be called upon to take the spirit of this Love into his own life. ' The Ethic, as well as the rest, compels an Amen from my conscience,' he would say.

If, now, some one should say to this good man, ' Do you propose to address yourself to the work of obeying this Christian Ethic ? ' and he should answer, ' There is nothing I so earnestly desire as to do so ' ; if, then, the

other should reply, ' And do you hope to succeed ? Man in his first estate failed under a much less stringent demand : on what do you base your hopes of success now ? ' what, again, would he answer ? Who shall say ? Certainly in his inmost heart he will call up hope in God : he may have heard the word Salvation, in something like its full meaning, from Christian lips : he may have heard of the New Birth and some mystic means thereto ; but, unless he has learned much more than these fragments, he will feel that the great work now before him is to ascertain the divine provision for enabling man to become that out of which the fulfilment of the Christian Ethic will be possible to him.

BOOK V

THE DIVINE PROVISION FOR THE FULFILMENT
OF THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC

1. The Christian Ethic expresses a twofold demand of God :
 Man's incapacity met at every stage by a divine provision.
 To work out more than a restoration :
 a renovation and exaltation of humanity.
2. Means to this end.
 First group stated :
 addressed to the reason and the conscience.
3. Mystic means.
 Definition of a Sacrament.
 Conversion distinguished from ' New Birth,' ' Regeneration.'
 ' Is the New Life morally called for ? '
 ' Is it coherent with the purposes of the Incarnation ? '
 ' Does it answer to the needs of our condition ? '
4. A plea urged :
 On the ground of man's free will ;
 On the demand of Christ : His claims and His
 need

BOOK V¹

THE DIVINE PROVISION FOR THE FULFILMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC

§ 1

AT the close of the previous book, we came face to face with the Christian Ethic, which expresses (in sequence with the doctrine of the Love of God, the record of the embodiment of that Love in the Incarnation, and the promise of the carrying on of that Love in the proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven and in the gift of the Holy Ghost) the demand of Christ upon man to enter upon the spirit of that Love, and render it in the activities of his own life. But also we saw, as taught by Christianity and experience, the incapacity of man to respond to the demands of Christ, and the necessity for a divine provision to enable him to become and to do that which in himself he cannot be and do ; and we saw that to inquire into the nature of that divine provision was the work next before him who would understand, that he might obey, the Christian Faith.

For those who have heard of and believe in Christ, it is clearly laid down in Christianity that there is a specific divine provision for working out in them the character and the condition to which they are to be brought. To every man some divine provision, over and above the appeal to conscience, is a necessity. It is much to repent of the sin that is past ; much to be converted to God ;

¹ Book V was left unrevised at the author's death. It is therefore published with some hesitation ; but the point reached at the close of Book IV seems to indicate its inclusion in the series.

but the two together do not eradicate the tendency to evil present in every man. The nature has to be cleansed, the constitution has to be restored, the man has to be made 'upright' again; he needs renovation, and if he is willing to yield to God he receives it. How, then, does Christ restore men who accept Him to original righteousness?

It seems that Christ's work of renovation in those who are specially His is a part of a larger work of remaking them, in their spiritual constitution, for uses higher than those set before the race at its beginning.¹ If only for the reason that we know so little of the constitution of human nature, it is impossible, in the smallest measure, to tabulate the changes effected by this mystic process; but it is pretty safe to say that there is one which is not, and one which is, among the number of those changes. The one which is not is the rectification of the moral purpose. This precedes the process, and is the qualification required in him who shall be made subject to it. Before faith in Christ, even, and still more, therefore, before the reception of His distinctive operations, repentance towards God must take place. This is a transaction between God and the soul, and at every stage is the preparation for every gift of God in the region of the spiritual life.

The change which certainly *is* effected by the transforming process is the elevation of the moral capacity. Man brings to Christ the converted will; but a converted will may go with small power and little discernment. The

¹ It is thinkable that the period described by the words 'And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good' (Gen. i. 31) indicates a period marked off from its antecedents and consequents. This period, assuming it to be a reality, is characterised by hugeness, but lacking that intensity and rapidity which are manifested in later presentments. This period would seem to end that epoch to which the words in the Genesis narrative apply. It would, however, seem to have a counter characteristic, not as anywhere dogmatically recorded, but tending in some minds, perhaps, to a vision and hypothesis of times more innocent, though less intellectual. 'Very good,' a man might say, wants justifying; and certainly the introduction of the Fall demands a tremendous justification. It seems as if man's imagination leaves him gazing, on the one hand, on a Golden Age, and, on the other hand, on the pandemonium of actual history.

moral cannot reach its highest except in the newly made : it cannot reach its highest, we may believe, in the merely renovated, if such there are or are to be. Christ finds the spiritual constitution of man marred and broken ; He finds the moral condition of man corrupt and feeble : He might, conceivably, have set Himself to restore the one and cleanse and reinvigorate the other. He has done more. He says to those who know Him : ‘ Yield to Me for the purposes of My love, and then out of My own resources, you always consenting with your whole heart, I will make you what I need you to be, which shall include all that at your best you ever were ; and I will raise you to heights of virtue before impossible to you, which shall involve all the virtues of which you ever dreamed. You shall be new creatures, in whose forms shall be visible the lineaments of that image in which you first were made.’

§ 2

We now come to the question : What are the means by which Christ is believed to accomplish the renovation and exaltation of humanity ?

The first group of these means are :

The Declaration of God (except in cases where so much as that is known) ;

The Call to Repentance ;

The Proclamation of Christ as the Revelation of God, and as the Saviour, Teacher, Example, and Judge of men ;

The Proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The question of the truth of the doctrines herein contained is not the one immediately before us—the question rather is that of the effect of it upon one who should receive the Declaration and Call and respond to it. Now, this effect is, before all things, the awakening of contrition, and the production of a rectified purpose in life. This effect is commonly called Conversion. In genuine converts

who have been men of upright lives, the contrition may not at first be prominent, and the Kingdom of Heaven proclamation may more appeal to their hearts. But the contrition will come later and growingly as their spiritual life and discernment advance. Similarly, men who have up to the time of their submission to Christ striven to walk according to the light they had, may be said not to need a rectified purpose; yet it must be acknowledged that the difference between a good pagan and a Christian saint in the matter of purpose is profound. The thing here contended for, however, is not that all who become disciples of Christ need to be converted, but that conversion is characteristic of, yea, peculiar to, the region in which, with man's consent, Christ rules. It ought, indeed, to be true that conversion is peculiar to that time in which men pass from pagan darkness to light; but, alas! millions who have been born and brought up with the Christian Name upon them need conversion as much as do pagans. But with them the thing needed is not the revelation of new truth or a general call to repentance: it is, instead, the willingness to obey the right known to them that they need. This willingness may be awakened by any demand, Christian, Theistic, or merely human, that calls upon the personal conscience: this being obeyed, the Power that works Conversion, in the large sense of the word, is set free, and the person may move on to more and more widespread sense of, and obedience to, righteousness. There are good pagans, and a good man may grow better with the years: good pagans may influence worse pagans to be better men; but that mysterious change by which a man, oftentimes suddenly, turns round upon himself, and begins a new course of life, is peculiar to contact with Christ. If this is true, it demonstrates a power in Christ's first means of renovating and exalting humanity which makes it a new departure in religion. That the means exist is a fact patent to all eyes; that they work is proved if what is here maintained concerning Conversion is also a fact.

These are, however, but the first of Christ's means ; and Christianity teaches that though the man in whom they have had their way has passed from darkness to light, from the road to death to the road of life, they do not by themselves suffice to prepare a man for a place and for service in the Kingdom of Heaven.

§ 3

The means which have been enumerated are external, with, if so it is, an interior power energising them : they are addressed to the reason and the conscience.

The means next to be considered is, also, mystic, but it has an external and even material aspect, though some would hold that this material aspect is not an element of the ' means,' but merely an arrangement designed to make obvious to the candidate that something has taken place when he has been baptised. ' When he has been baptised '—for Baptism is the mystic means under consideration. These mystic means are believed by the Church, as a rule, to be spiritual realities, not merely liturgical expedients. They number at least two, and according to a very large part of the Church seven. All of them are held to have the same fundamental object, and in their unity they are known as Sacraments. A Sacrament may be defined as a symbolical rite, authorised by God, upon the due performance of which the faithful candidate receives from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Ghost, the grace represented by the symbolical rite. The grace which Baptism is believed to represent is the New Birth.

Now, what is the New Birth ? Some describe it as Conversion : that repentance towards God to which reference has just been made. In doing this, they part company with the general mind of the Christian Church, which distinguishes between conversion and regeneration, and with some words in the passage in the New Testament (St. John iii. 5) which, otherwise, seem most to favour their view. Yet no one could say that as a mere choice

of human language they had chosen a great name for a small thing. For a man to turn from the following of self and sin to the following of God and righteousness might well be called the beginning of a new life ; and the beginning of a life is a birth ; and such a turning, so far from being a small thing, is, from the human side, the greatest of all things, and must be the basis of all good things that are to follow from the divine side. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the continuance in that fear—the continuance, that is, in that attitude towards God which conversion brings about—is the continuance, and the only fundamental continuance, in wisdom.

But this change, profound as is its importance, is not the New Birth : it is but the preparation for it, the condition—not meritorious, but moral—of its reception ; and there is nothing mystic about it. It is the plain duty of a rational, responsible being who has sinned or chosen self and evil ; and it lies within the possibilities of human nature as it is, God enabling—the divine summons which comes to every man having been sounded or whispered. The proof is that when this summons comes it is deep, and it may be final sin to fail to respond. It is the burden of the whole New Testament and of all sound Christian teaching that the duty of repentance towards God rests upon man. He has no such duty to be regenerate : *that* is the *gift* of God, pure and simple, and his duty towards it, beginning after its reception, is to act it out.

And we may go further, and say that even belief in Christ, which under the Gospel proclamation is generally corporate with repentance, is also prior to the mystic process. The Christ to believe in is a Gift of God ; but the belief in Him, He being truly announced, is a rational act, a human duty, possible to man as he is, God enabling ; and, once more, the proof is that failure to believe, or the refusal to believe, is sin. Of course, in the mystery of God and man all repentance, and all faith, and every motion to good, is by the Holy Ghost ; but, as has already been

said of faith in particular, they are by the Holy Ghost in such a sense that they are the duty of man.

It is after repentance and faith have been wrought and reached that, in the adult, the mystic work begins.¹ The mystic work begins, but not then does conversion end. Not only have faith and will to lay hold of and respond to the work which is wholly God's; there has also to be a perpetual turning from evil: a deliberate choice of God. Conversion is lifelong. The whole work of sanctification, though it is of God by the grace of Christ, depends, for the possibility of its effectuation, upon the faithful response and determined co-operation of the human will, which no work of God dethrones from its awful responsibility. That obligation, which rests upon every man, to live a godly and righteous life, cannot be escaped from in the hope that God plays proxy for man. The battle of life is sternest for him who thinks himself called to be upon the staff, and admitted to the privacy of the Commander's plans and powers. Christianity is not an expedient to substitute piety for righteousness: not less but tenfold more must the righteousness of the law be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 'Regenerate are you?' a Christian man might say to his brother or to himself; 'then of course you have parted company with sin for ever, except to meet in mortal combat.'

But the utmost preparedness for the gift, and the utmost fidelity to it when it has been received, would not constitute Regeneration. What then is the act or state, in and of itself?

It has come to pass that in the growth of theologic language 'New Birth' has given place to 'Regeneration,' and this latter term goes deeper than New Birth. The thing implied is not simply a new mode of living, but a new *life*, a new vital tendency and energy derived from a

¹ The Church holds that infants may properly be baptised. But it is desirable for the purpose of this examination that the case of adult converts should be taken as the norm.

new life fount. The new vital energy, according to the Christian doctrine, is the life, the vitality, of Christ, derived into him who receives it by union with Christ, of whom he is regenerate by the Spirit. Mystic absolutely : but is it morally intelligible? Is it morally called for? Is it coherent with the purposes of the Incarnation? Does it answer to the needs of our condition? The answer to all these is, surely, 'Yes,' if the thing is a reality. Whether it is a reality or not must be decided, not on psychological, but on moral grounds. That an already existing person should be so incorporated with another person as to have his life fount in him, put psychologically, appears as incredible as Nicodemus seemed to find it; but given that the other Person is the Eternal Son of God made Man; given that from our native stock we derive only mere human powers and aims; given that the work of the Kingdom of Heaven far outsoars the purest human, and is the outcome of an act wherein God, while remaining God, becomes other than God for its accomplishment: then, union with Christ, through which in proportion to our faith and will we may derive from Him all that in His Divine Humanity He is, to make us all that He would have us to be, and to be used by us for the furthering of all that in His Divine Humanity He purposes, begins to have a meaning to us spite of its mystery. To make it mean more we have but to meditate how He differs from us, what He asks in us, and what is the work to which He calls us. All turns upon the Incarnation and its uses: apart from these, Regeneration would be a baseless dream: with them, God being God, the work and purpose of Christ being what they are, and the condition of man being what it is, Regeneration, spite of its mystery, is profoundly natural.

§ 4

Entrance upon Church membership and Baptism are not a completed thing: they are but a beginning; and if matters end with them no fruit can be expected. The

in-church life, the sacramental life, is one, and the question of fruit may justly be postponed until the results of the entirety of that life, faithfully lived, can be adduced. Meantime a counter-plea shall be urged. The Christian doctrine is that the new life gives capacity and tendency, but leaves the person sovereign. The regenerate man can still choose evil if he will, and it may be that the evil wrought by him is deeper than that which any pagan can work. But if he chooses good, the new life is spiritual enabling. The things needed to make the new life effectual are faith and will: faith, that the new life is a reality; will, to use it for purposes of righteousness and holiness, for purposes of the Kingdom of Heaven. The explicitly infidel deny the new life, and take little pains to live in accordance with the best demands of the old one. The majority of men lazily acknowledge the new life, and, for the most part, live as if it were not a fact. Through these two classes it is that Christendom is so much like heathendom. There are men of a third class, not yet saints, but neither wicked nor indifferent. Their defect is a lack, not of will, but of faith. Christendom and the Church as these now are bewilder them, and the new life seems to them more like a beautiful dream than a fact. Well, if such men do entirely doubt whether Christianity as an interior thing is a reality, they can do nothing but remain where they are, doing their best to use the moral power which they do believe themselves to possess. A man must not run beyond his faith. But if they have misgivings; if sometimes the sense of something more than themselves stirs within them; if the sight of some saintly life arrests them; one would ask them to remember that they were born into an order built upon the belief of the new life, and that the Master of that new order may have both claims upon them and need of them. Deep need of them He certainly has, if He Himself is a reality, which these men are far from denying; for they are the men who, rejoined to the Christian body by faith, would help to free it from its suffocating entanglements with pandemonium. An honest purpose

is 'the' one thing needful, but moral tone enormously tells. These men have moral tone; they have noble ethical conceptions. The sincerest faith is consistent with something approaching to moral squalor, for the individual is what he is, and cannot, except gradually, rise above his old self. For a spiritual corporation, a preponderance of such individuals is a tragic thing. To make a corporate life worthy, individuals of lofty tone are essential. But such individuals are apt to be not men of faith: it is their temptation. With the men in question one would therefore plead: 'Yield to faith, if you can. The vision that you love is found in Christianity, and there only. Surely it is of faith in God to believe that the power will go with the Vision. Do not let the failures of men blind you. Go down to the roots of your trust in God. The Love of God, the Incarnate Son, the Kingdom of Heaven, the New Life, form a series: each makes the others credible: as in the life of Christ each incident makes the others credible. The failures of men are discounted by the fact that man needed saving. The present condition of Christendom, outrageous as it is in itself, is consistent with things looked at in the large. You, by the defect of your merits, are always expecting man to succeed: the very basis of Christianity is that he always fails. It is God who succeeds; and you must be as patient as God is. Start from where you are, but start again.' A man immersed in the travail of these days must not expect, at first, at all events, the childlike faith of the early Christian generations. For a pagan, surrounded by the lies and corruptions of the condition into which he was born, to hear the holy story of the Christ, and, attested by eye-witnesses, the miracle of His resurrection, and to be conquered by what he heard, was a very simple matter, if the man's heart was honest and his spirit was at all alive. Baptism easily followed, and the searching and proving of the man came afterwards. But now this simple acceptance of facts upon evidence is the hardest of all things. We are nearly cured of believing; and the Gospel story falls upon

weary ears. The only thing that a good man nowadays is sure of is the moral ; and if the Christian Vision has conquered his moral sense he should count that for faith, and act accordingly. ' I have almost forgotten,' it is left for him to say, ' what *true* means ; but I know that this is *good*, and I give in my adhesion to it.' Upon such a basis as this a man could not be a religious *teacher* ; but as a *disciple* he might thus move forward with entire integrity ; and happy would be the congregation that received him into its fellowship.

85184

